UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA
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Reading *No Country for Old Men* and *The Road*: Trauma in Contemporary Literature and Cinema

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Orientadores: Prof. Doutor José Duarte
Prof. Doutora Maria Teresa De Salter Cid Gonçalves Pires

Tese especialmente elaborada para obtenção do grau de Doutor no ramo de Estudos de Literatura e Cultura, especialidade de Estudos Americanos.

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- Doutora Ana Daniela Alcobia Coelho da Silva, Investigadora Júnior do Centro de Estudos Anglísticos da Universidade de Lisboa.

2021

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Acknowledgements

Were I to utter one single name to whom this humble dissertation is inherently indebted, Professor José Duarte, whose incisive and liberal directions breathed academic life into my humble work, would be my choice. Alerting me to my oversights, he ensconced my writings at the ease of crystallization and sculpted their torso to the point of release, not to mention how swiftly all his caring critique found a way of getting mailed to me. I am in his debt forever. Professor Teresa Cid's meaningful presence all along this eventful journey did but instill awe and motivation in my psyche.

I cannot afford to lose sight of a few other precious names. My homage to them will not and cannot be paid fully only by a superficial mention of their names, but this is the closest I can get to feeling the cathartic release of the gratitude I owe them. Reza Maleki Sedghi, a friend, mentor and a spiritual guide, was the person without whom this dissertation would have failed in many ways. My conversations with him in desperate times allowed me to grow out of the academically traumatic pitfalls which would have otherwise haunted me for a lifetime. Thank you, Reza.

Countless and matchless thanks go to Ali, my favorite genius and friend, who provided me with multifarious types of support. Ali, I can never bring myself to forget how the many tons of books you sent me could not have rendered my studies any deeper or more meaningful.

I should pay my sincere tribute to Professor Adelaide Serras. Having set foot in Lisbon for the first time, I felt overwhelmingly estranged. This estrangement could have lingered on if it had not been for the cheerful face and the generously ebullient personality of Professor Serras, the very person to whom I owe my PhD admission. She made me feel at home.

I can never reciprocate the token of kindness bestowed upon me by the professors of the University of Lisbon among whom the names Luisa Flora and Diana Almeida shine.

I cannot even start to thank Y whose moment-by-moment company gave me the momentum towards the completion of this work. The penned pages are as much yours as they are mine.

Indira, the word sublime feels shamed once you storm onto the stage of humanity with your unprecedented codes, ethics, and passion. Immeasurable thanks go to Mahdi and Parsa for all their gestures of goodwill and irreplaceable magnanimity.

My parents and siblings could not have facilitated my journey to Lisbon, hence the dissertation journey likewise, any better. They will never fade away from my heart and soul.

Equally integral to the accomplishment of this mission was the support I received from the psychiatrist friends of mine. Alireza and Arash, you are eternally carved on the bedrock of my memory.

Dear F, even if you think you are gone, not a moment goes by that I don't feel your inspiring and at times haunting footprints in my life and the life of this dissertation. Thanks for letting me take the credit for it.

Abstract

Barely has literature failed to inspire the concept of trauma. Nor has trauma been a trivial cogitation for literature. This reciprocation, which is ingrained in the ineludible alliance between the two, has given rise to innumerable masterpieces throughout the history of literature from classic works of Homer to the modernist works of Woolf, Faulkner, and Hemingway. Nonetheless, trauma studies were not formulated in literature until two decades ago, which shapes an uncanny question mark never to be erased.

Cormac McCarthy's traumatic footprint in literature is as inerasable as the very same question mark, insofar as most, if not all, of his canon has been indelibly imbued with the notion of trauma. His characters seem to have a uniquely innovative bearing of traumatization, which is rarely found with that weight in other analogous works of literature. Chigurh, called the "prophet of destruction" by McCarthy himself in *No Country for Old Men* (2005), punches a hole into the forehead of his victims, leaving his vile mark metaphorically on the decaying civilization. Ballard in *Child of God* (1973), in what is termed as necrophilia, makes love to his victims, while judge Holden in *Blood Meridian* (1985) kills children, collects scalps, and never dies. This traumatic road eventually boils down to *The Road* (2006) in which everything comes to naught: an ashen apocalypse.

Lending themselves to widespread critical acclaim, the novels *No Country for Old Men* and *The Road* did not fail to lend themselves to silver screen translations, which were indebted to the directorial efforts of the Coen brothers and John Hillcoat in 2007 and 2009, respectively. The narratives, textually or visually, are densely informed, if not formed, by the notion of trauma, which consolidates not only the bond between the two novels but also the traumatic trajectory from the novels to the films. It is thus through a thoroughgoing analysis of trauma and its footprints that a mastery of the inner workings, mysteries, and thematics of the aforementioned narratives will come to life, which is what the present dissertation aspires to achieve. Composed of three chapters, the foregoing dissertation sets out to initially establish the theoretical framework for trauma notions in chapter one whose application will shape the arguments of chapters two and three for the novels/films *No Country for Old Men* and *The Road*, respectively.

Keywords: trauma, Cormac McCarthy, the Coen brothers, John Hillcoat, cinema, literature.

Resumo

A literatura raramente deixa de servir de inspiração a um qualquer conceito de trauma. De igual forma, o trauma não é uma cogitação trivial para a literatura. Esta reciprocidade, que está enraizada na ineludível aliança entre os dois, deu origem a inúmeras obras-primas ao longo da história da literatura, desde obras clássicas de Homero até às obras modernistas de Woolf, Faulkner e Hemingway. Não obstante, os estudos de trauma começaram a surgir com maior incidência na literatura nas duas últimas décadas, o que dá forma a um ponto de interrogação inquietante, que nunca é apagado. A pegada traumática de Cormac McCarthy na literatura é tão inextinguível como esse mesmo ponto de interrogação, na medida em que a maioria, se não a totalidade, do seu cânone está indelevelmente imbuída da noção de trauma. As suas personagens parecem ter uma ligação única e inovadora com o trauma, que raramente é encontrado com este peso noutras obras análogas da literatura. Chigurh, apelidado de "profeta da destruição" pelo próprio McCarthy em *No Country for Old Men* (2005), faz um buraco na testa das suas vítimas, deixando metaforicamente a sua marca vil na civilização decadente. Ballard em *Child of God* (1973), no que é denominado de necrofilia, faz amor com as suas vítimas, enquanto o juiz Holden em *Blood Meridian* (1985) mata crianças, colecciona escalpes, e nunca morre. Esta traumática estrada acaba por levar a *The Road* (2006), na qual tudo se reduz a nada: um apocalipse de cinzas.

Tendo sido aclamados pela crítica em geral, os livros *No Country for Old Men* e *The Road* foram igualmente levados ao grande ecrã através dos esforços de realização dos irmãos Coen e de John Hillcoat, em 2007 e 2009, respectivamente. Estas narrativas, textuais e visuais, são densamente informadas, se não formadas, pela noção de trauma, que consolida não só a ligação entre os dois romances, mas também a trajetória traumática desde os romances até aos filmes. É, portanto, através de uma análise aprofundada do trauma e das suas pegadas que um domínio sobre o funcionamento interior, os mistérios e as temáticas das narrativas acima mencionadas ganhará vida, que é o que a presente dissertação aspira a alcançar.

O primeiro capítulo deste estudo visa fornecer um repertório teórico do discurso do trauma sobre o qual se basearão os argumentos subsequentes dos capítulos dois e três. Assim, este capítulo fará uma primeira incursão num domínio de definição de trauma, a fim de

assegurar inicialmente um nicho para a compreensão primária do conceito de trauma. Como é expectável, esta linha de incursões incluirá as correntes de pensamento de Cathy Caruth, conhecida como um das principais nomes dos estudos de trauma e que introduziu inicialmente a estética do trauma no reino da literatura através seu livro seminal *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996). Baseado fortemente no pensamento freudiano, a análise do discurso de Caruth sobre o trauma terá recurso a fundamentos como a essência espectral do trauma e a sua não-referencialidade ou temporalidade perdida. Revelando o misterioso ângulo de *flashbacks*, o capítulo abordará as posições críticas de pensadores de trauma como Hustvedt, para não mencionar a famosa noção de "compulsão de repetição", cuja criação é creditada a Freud. A "realidade" de Lacan, como um argumento exegético pertinente, será aqui adicionalmente discutida, abordando a natureza inassimilável do encontro traumático. A premente visualidade do trauma e o seu assoberbante mutismo daí resultante relembram o pensamento crítico de Hartman, que se baseia no "Boy of Winander" de Wordsworth.

Uma das maiores contribuições para a poética do trauma é a de LaCapra, cujo ensaio seminal "Trauma, Absence, Loss" (1999) tem reunido um grande número de seguidores. A dicotomia "ausência/perda" de LaCapra será um prelúdio para a dicotomia "reagir/resolver", que virá igualmente à luz neste capítulo. A crítica testemunhal, com o seu profundo enfoque nas formas como as vítimas de trauma podem desenvolver um mecanismo de libertação dos seus traumas é outro constituinte deste capítulo, que englobará nomes como Felman (1991), Marder (2006), Laub e Podell (1995). Além disso, o capítulo lançará luz sobre a noção de atraso, ligando-o aos nomes de pensadores como Freud (1939), Caruth (1996) e Laplanche (2001). Em desacordo com o pensamento clássico sobre o trauma, encontra-se a nova escola do trauma, através das vozes de Balaev (2008, 2014) e Belau (2001), que proporcionam novas perspectivas tais como crescimento, renascimento e resiliência no discurso do trauma.

Injustamente, o trauma planeia a sua incursão de igual forma na psique imaculada das crianças, advindo daí o conceito de trauma infantil, que irá formular outra grande corrente analítica neste capítulo. Esta corrente dependerá principalmente dos pensamentos críticos de Reviere (1996) e Shengold (1989), que teorizaram abundantemente sobre este tema. "O Estranhamente Familiar", como uma noção difundida em muitas obras literárias, e particularmente no cânone de McCarthy, raramente se distanciou da estética do trauma. Dito de outra forma, o laço inabalável entre o "estranhamente familiar" freudiano e a ficção do

trauma tem sido um reduto do qual muitas obras-primas inigualáveis têm nascido. Informando o próprio epicentro do discurso do "estranhamente familiar", a morte e a repetição parecem falhar às vítimas do trauma em todas as frentes possíveis. Estes elementos assombrosos que alimentam os tropos traumáticos serão a linha argumentativa na qual se basearão a maioria dos argumentos teóricos deste capítulo.

O segundo capítulo da dissertação terá como objetivo trazer à luz os diálogos entre o quadro teórico previamente construído no capítulo um e os traumas que moldaram a narrativa de *No Country for Old Men*. Uma boa parte dos argumentos de trauma deste capítulo gira em torno de Chigurh, o "profeta da destruição", e de como este, enquanto fantasma do trauma, tanto caça como atormenta as demais personagens de uma forma brutal e robótica, usando uma assombrosa arma de abater gado que faz um buraco na testa das suas vítimas. Alicerces do trauma tão diversos como a espectralidade, a crítica testemunhal, a ausência/perda, o trauma intergeracional, o crescimento e "o estranhamente familiar" irão emergir na fase crítica dos nossos argumentos. Tendo orquestrado os diálogos esteticamente significantes entre o mundo do trauma e *No Country for Old Men* de McCarthy, este capítulo dirigir-se-á para o mundo visual dos irmãos Coen. A análise visual, devo enfatizar, será apenas seletiva ao longo de todo o capítulo, na medida em que apenas investigará os momentos traumáticos previamente elucidados no texto de McCarthy.

Numa linha semelhante, o terceiro capítulo da presente dissertação visará o modo exegético relacional entre os tropos do trauma e a obra *The Road* de McCarthy. Centrada num apocalipse temporalmente vago, a narrativa parece ser propensa ao tropo de trauma de não-referencialidade ou à temporalidade perdida. Temporalidade à parte, McCarthy faz com que todos os traumas, canibalismo e infanticídio, ocorram a uma personagem que é ainda uma criança, daí a adequação das discussões sobre traumas infantis. Além disso, o capítulo irá lançar luz sobre o testemunho e os seus constituintes, principalmente ouvir e falar, que parecem funcionar melhor que nunca através dos espaços traumáticos da narrativa apocalíptica. Todos os esforços do par de colectores não visam senão a sobrevivência, que é outro tropo do trauma, daí a formulação de outra parte deste capítulo à luz deste conceito. Todos estes momentos textuais de trauma se prestarão a uma análise visual, tendo como âmago os esforços de realização de John Hillcoat.

Ao colocar os fundamentos teóricos para o discurso sobre o trauma no primeiro capítulo e ao moldar a dialética que se segue entre este capítulo e os particulares tropos do

trauma das narrativas do *corpus* nos capítulos dois e três, a atual dissertação não terá por objetivo apenas desvendar os mistérios, os códigos e a temática que se encontram sob a superfície de *No Country for Old Men* e *The Road* de McCarthy, mas tentará também descobrir a própria estética visual, em momentos traumáticos seletivos, através da qual os irmãos Coen e Hillcoat fixaram as suas assinaturas nestes filmes.

Palavras-chave: trauma, Cormac McCarthy, the Coen brothers, John Hillcoat, cinema, literatura.

Introduction

The dissertation in hand sets out to explore two of Cormac McCarthy's novels titled *No Country for Old Men* (2005) and *The Road* (2006). Prone to visualization, the two narratives made their way onto the silver screen under the same titles with the adaptational efforts of the Coen brothers and John Hillcoat in 2007 and 2009 respectively. The above-cited works achieved critically distinguished acclaim, among which the academy awards won by the film *No Country for Old Men* and the Pulitzer Prize bestowed upon the novel *The Road* in the same year could be mentioned. The narratives, textually or visually, are densely informed, if not formed, by the notion of trauma, which consolidates not only the bond between the two novels but also the traumatic trajectory from the novels to the films. It is thus through a thoroughgoing analysis of trauma and its footprints that a mastery of the inner workings, mysteries, and thematics of the aforementioned narratives will come to life, which is what the present dissertation aspires to achieve.

Any narrative casts its lot with the concept of trauma in more ways than one, and this has been the underlying grand narrative in literature even far before it was officially acknowledged as literature. On closer inspection, the main plank of classic literature, with writers such as Homer, Ovid and Sophocles and their works lying at its heart, is but grounded on the notion of trauma. In like manner, most biblical tales, which have ineluctably inspired many seminal works in fiction, poetry and drama with instances as diverse as Dante, Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton, have at their heart a trauma narrative. From Crusades to French Revolution to even Industrial Revolution, trauma seems to have afforded to run its roots down into the very essence of all the historical and socio-political cornerstones of civilization. Contemporary times have been no exception to the reign of this discourse either, insofar as two world wars and the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers have proven to be emblematically traumatizing. Nonetheless, trauma studies were not formulated in literature until two decades ago. A question mark never to be erased.

Cormac McCarthy's canon has been indelibly imbued with the notion of trauma. Striking a close chord with the aesthetics of biblical tales and classical literature on many fronts, McCarthy's canon stands as one of the most compelling emblems of trauma. His characters seem to have a uniquely innovative bearing of traumatization, which is barely found with that weight in other analogous works of literature. Chigurh, called the "prophet of destruction" by McCarthy himself in *No Country for Old Men,* uses a cattle gun to punch a hole or a third eye into the forehead of his victims, leaving his vile mark metaphorically on the already decaying civilization. Ballard in *Child of God* (1973), in what is termed as necrophilia, makes love to his victims, while judge

Holden in *Blood Meridian* (1985) kills children, collects scalps, dances wildly and never dies. All such traumatizing innovations are instantiated anew throughout McCarthy's oeuvre coming down the road only to meet his solo surviving pair in *The Road*, who bear witness to the roasting of an infant on spits or the marauding gangs eating each other. Another creative trauma footprint by McCarthy: the apocalypse.

The fluid matter-of-taste notion of trauma metamorphosed into an autonomous discourse via its seminal conception which came at the hands of Cathy Caruth, known as the mother of trauma studies in literature. By virtue of her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), she set in motion the very dynamics and aesthetics upon which the later trauma rhetoric was predicated. Relying heavily on Freudian tenets, majorly *Moses and Monotheism*, Caruth characterizes trauma as a wound not only inflicted on the body but on the soul.

This wound, then, haunts, Caruth notes, its victim eternally, casting its sinister shadow on his/her psyche for as long as he/she lives, hence the spectral trope of trauma. Apart from the haunting effect, trauma seems to fall on an unreliable plane of narration, which constitutes the very nature of its non-referentiality. This traumatic trope, once more, derives itself from the Freudian hermeneutics apropos the biblical tale of Moses and his emancipating odyssey from Egypt to Canaan, whose details this study will survey in the first chapter. Thus, these two traumatic tropes of haunting and the non-referentiality will be the ground upon which the majority of my arguments will hinge, as the corpus narratives seem to be heavily informed by such traumatic tropes. For instance, Chigurh in *No Country for Old Men* is as spectral as the ghost of trauma whose haunting possesses the psyche of the characters and the audience alike. In *The Road*, barely can one make sense of what did away with the world, which runs in tandem with the trope of non-referentiality.

Integral to discourse of trauma is the concept of flashback, which is another way for the traumatized memory to come to terms with the moment of trauma. Of a rather sensory nature than linguistic, flashbacks urge the victim to turn to the moment of trauma recurrently, hence its unavoidable displeasure. Such displeasing temporal journeys to the moment of trauma could likewise be likened to Caruth's portrayal of PTSD in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* or how the post-traumatic encounters possess the psyche of the patient incessantly (151). This traumatic trope acquires further significance once it is investigated in the light of Freudian "repetition compulsion" in "Remembering, Repeating, and Working through" and how trauma victims are exhorted to repeat the same traumatic act over and over in hopes of working them through eventually (150-

155). Last but not least, all such rhetoric is tangential to Lacanian "real", a mysterious arena in which the traumatic moment is "missed" as it cannot be incorporated into the symbolic realm, hence its un-assimilable essence is Lacan's lens (53-55). The foregoing study aims at shaping a dialogue between the aforementioned threads of trauma discourse and the corpus narratives, insofar as flashbacks and their implications seem to occupy a massive traumatic space of the narratives, particularly in *The Road*.

Of germane kinship with the concept of trauma is the thought current inherent in the writings of Hartman. Enamored with Wordsworth's poetry, Boy of Winander from "The Prelude" in the main, Hartman, in "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies", writes a great deal apropos a boy who is not only overwhelmed by the power of nature but also equally in dire need of nature's help to process the haunting images of nature. Mute all throughout the narrative, the boy finds nature as "his most generous concept" (633), with whose reciprocation he finds his utmost emancipation. The narrative is as mute, haunting, and visually charged as possible, all of which are the tropes which seem to mesh efficiently well with the rhetoric of trauma. The study in hand will initially detail Hartman's thought streams in chapter one so that the later analogous exegeses of chapters two and three in unravelling the corpus narratives, by dint of the previously established theoretical framework, will be feasible. That the narrative of *The Road* is rife with a traumatized nature, muteness and visuality could pertinently serve the purpose of the project in this respect.

One of the greatest contributions to the poetics of trauma has been made by LaCapra whose seminal essay "Trauma, Absence, Loss" (1999) has garnered a large following. Making "absence" and "loss" consonant with terms like trans-historical and historical traumas respectively, LaCapra contends that "absence" has never existed in the first place, while the concept of "loss" is particularly evident through its formation (700). Warning all against the conflation of the two terms, LaCapra seems to ultimately opt for the absence-to-loss transformation over that of loss-to-absence, in that this transformation seems to obliterate the anxiety generating essence of "absence", whose anxiety eventually comes to naught via this process. Moreover, the process facilitates the determination of a traceable source for the absence-oriented anxiety, which is attendant upon psyche of the victim (707). All such threads will come to light in chapter one, which will be followed by chapters two and three raising questions concerning how LaCapra's model contributes to trauma language of *No Country for Old Men* and *The Road*.

Another significant train of thought in trauma discourse is indebted to the dichotomy of "acting-out/working-through", with whose original inception Freud is credited. In "Remembering, Repeating and Working-through" Freud famously argues that "the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he *repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" (150-151). This will to repeat or "compulsion to repeat" is what pervades the famed dichotomy of "acting-out/working through" set forth by LaCapra, which basically purports that the trauma victim needs to work through the trauma, or mourn it, in order to leave behind the phase of acting it out. If this mourning fails the patient, an eternal impasse, melancholy in particular, is what the patient will be mired in (698). The trauma narratives in this study both unfold in the backcloth of this dichotomy whose conquering side, depending on the character, will be revealed in the chapters to be composed. Does Bell in *No Country for Old Men* favor a state of melancholy or mourning upon realizing his abject incompetence in pursuing the ghostly Chigurh? In like manner, do the solo scavenging pair of father and son act out or work through the apocalyptic cannibalism and infanticide? These are a few queries to which chapters two and three will aspire to provide due answers.

This dichotomy-oriented plane of exegesis with LaCapra's reasoning at its epicenter will be further fortified by Onega and Ganteau's notion theorizing how the patient has recourse to "sensorial images instead of words" (3). Stated differently, the victim finds himself/herself at the mercy of images in order to work the trauma through. This conception seems to run utterly parallel to Žižek's notion of symbolization "In order to cope with a trauma we symbolize" (qtd. in Wolfreys 126). Once more, what symbols or images do the corpus narrative offer which could facilitate the process of "working-through"? McCarthy's poetic writing cannot lose sight of such aesthetics whatsoever, even if not directly for trauma reasoning.

Once trauma plagues the heart and soul of a victim with a hard blow, the victim is to embark upon a response/release trajectory. This trajectory is known as testimonial criticism in the jargon of trauma which is indebted to Shoshana Felman's seminal book *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* co-authored by the renowned psychoanalyst Dori Laub. The testimonial path whose major staple is bearing witness to the traumatic experience is, at root, composed of the acts of listening and speaking:

> [T]he most urgent and essential claim of *Testimony* is to show that even though we do not 'recover' from our traumatic past, nor can we 'cure' it, 'overcome' it, or even fully understand it, we can and we must *listen* to it and *survive* it by listening to its effects as they are transmitted to us… Because bearing witness entails speaking in the first person in order to attest to a truth that can only be validated through the very act of speaking itself, testimony places the speaker in a unique and difficult position. (Marder 4)

With their relentless focus on the devastation of humanity, morality and civilization, the corpus narratives have a propensity for driving the characters, and the audience by extension, towards the realm of testimony. What makes this testimonial path, for instance in *No Country for Old Men*, so keenly felt is how Sheriff Bell, having borne witness to Chigurh's brutalities, turns to the initial italic monologues of each chapter expressing the irreparable hurting of his psyche. How testimonial can such lamenting or melancholy get? Or is one even entitled to feel at liberty to call this testimony? Analogously in *The Road*, the pair cannot help but bear witness to the wasteland and the post-apocalyptic atrocities of the world. All such testimonial threads seem to serve as the backcloth against which the trauma aesthetics of the narratives run, whose illumination will be the mission which the future chapters will accomplish.

Germane to the current argument of testimony is the concept of cure or therapy whose impetus is transparently found in the words of Hustvedt. Through her lens, once the traumatic experience is narrated or written by the victim, a sense of agency will be the least of its rewards: "Writing about my shaking did not cure me of the symptom, but it did give me a greater sense of control and agency" (par. 33). The same sentiment, which is called the "talking cure", pervades the thoughts of Hartman in "Trauma Within the Limits of Literature": "[t]he talking cure is also a homeopathic cure and literature could be viewed as a talking cure to a higher degree" (259).

All this testimonial thread can only chime with the voice of another trauma trope, namely survival. In other words, it is only through survival that the testimonial threads will feel effectual, hence the appellation of "Art of Trauma" by Laub and Podell: "survival itself should be considered as a type of art of trauma" (991). Integral to this art, Laub and Podell note, is a dialogue with the past: "In essence it is only through its indirect and dialogic nature that the art of trauma can come close to representing the emptiness at the core of trauma while still offering the survivor the

possibility of repression and repossession" (993). Within the framework of this study, it should be via the aesthetics of *The Road* and its characters that the "Art of Trauma" could secure itself a certain niche for argument, as most of the scavenging efforts of the pair seem to come down to nothing but survival.

Trauma possesses its own narrative, yet it runs constantly late as it is too much to take at the time of its occurrence, thereby gaining the title "belated". Relying on the Freudian analyses in *Moses and Monotheism* once more, Caruth employs the famed Freudian accident to characterize the belated nature of trauma. The accident victim ascertains the true gravity of the accident far later than the moment of trauma. Indeed, the victim, Caruth points out, has to forget or lose sight of the initial traumatic encounter only to enable himself/herself to restore the moment in "another place, another time" (17). This latency, in view of Moses's murder by the very same people who were unshackled by him, renders this particular trauma narrative, and by extension all trauma narratives, not only belated but also unreliable. Perhaps Whitehead's account duly captures the gist of my analysis:

> Caruth's insistence on the inherent belatedness of experience and understanding challenges the notion of a straightforward textual referentiality. If history is characterised by its continually delayed or deferred entrance into experience, as Caruth suggests, then there is a need to profoundly rethink the modes of our engagement with the past. History is no longer available as a completed knowledge, but must be reconceived as that which perpetually escapes or eludes our understanding. (13)

This survey, expectedly, will touch upon the critical views of Laplanche who opted for the term "afterwardsness" in lieu of belatedness. Caruth's interview with him will mark one of the first chapter's critical cornerstones whose application will come to fruition once the relational mode of analysis in chapters two and three will come to life. The traumatized characters, particularly Sheriff Bell in *No Country for Old Men,* seem to be overwhelmed by the heavy weight of the trauma, which Chigurh in the same narrative impose on them, hence unable to instantaneously come to terms with it. In *The Road,* however, the traumatic plane seems to suffer from a temporal imprecision which, once more, evokes the unreliability of the narrative theorized by Caruth.

That trauma is hauntingly incomprehensible in the eyes of Caruth is cast doubt on by the new school of trauma thinkers at whose heart stands Balaev. All the terminology grounded on the impossibility of trauma's nature encompassing terms such as "incomprehensible, unrepresentable and non-locatable" are reconsidered through the fluid lens of Balaev who asserts in "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory":

> In contrast to the abreactive model of the self as a fixed entity that then fragments, the trauma novel demonstrates that the reorganized self is relational and emerges relative to a specific place that produces a specific articulation of a transformed identity. This expression of the self is socially contingent and connected to a place of inhabitation and meaning, not binarily dependent on a linear re-enactment of a traumatic experience. The protagonist's subjectivity is, thus, depicted as a fluid process located in relation to new realities or new knowledge. (9)

Thus, it is with a sense of hope, fluidity and rebirth that Balaev's novel voice echoes. That trauma spreads like a disease from one generation to another, thereby earning the title "trans-historical" or "trans-generational" trauma by Caruth once more, is likewise repudiated by Balaev:

> The theory of intergenerational trauma conflates loss and absence and collapses boundaries between the individual and group, thereby suggesting that a person's contemporary identity can be 'vicariously traumatized' by reading about a historical narrative or due to a shared genealogy that affords the ability to righteously claim the social label of "victim" as part of personal or public identity. (3)

All such revisionist trauma rhetoric provides a new insight into how one can negotiate the previously established rigidities of trauma discourse, which is instrumental in developing not only further trauma aesthetics in general but also in aiding the fundamental arguments of this study in particular, insofar as the new voice of trauma begs to be heard in both narratives.

Linda Belau's voice hastens to abide by the same opposing resonance as that of Balaev did, save that she underlines the inability of the language in addressing the overwhelming essence of

trauma. In so doing, the traumatic moment betrays the principles of the symbolic bringing the materiality of its signifier(s) to a futile realm. Not incorporated to the body of the symbolic, this impossibility of trauma falls into a pitfall out of which it cannot climb, hence its so-called celestial and out-of-earth feature. However, Belau and similar thinkers steadfastly rise against this celestial and sublime nature attributing the whole case to the inconsistency or incompetence of language in overcoming the inadequacy of the material signifier:

> This ethic of the impossible, however, drives the subject beyond the social to an encounter with the inadequacy of the signifier as she moves beyond the particular event of her suffering to a failed encounter with the very possibility of knowing that suffering completely. The psychoanalytic intervention assures us, then, that we are responsible in the face of something that exceeds symbolic guarantee. This is the ethical dimension of trauma that gets left behind when we attempt to place traumatic experience beyond language and representation, beyond the traumatic materiality that is the signifier. (par. 2)

Faithful to the same insight is the critical angle of Derrida's thoughts when he underlines the "'impossibility and necessity' of bearing witness to the 'unexperienced experience'" (qtd. in Wolfreys 133). Chapter one will substantiate Belau's thought stream further by Ramadanovic's notions and Lanzman's documentary *Shoah* (1985). Belau's concept of inadequacy of language in addressing the compelling essence of trauma should be a critical plane on which the relational mode of this study's arguments, particularly in *The Road* given the lost materiality of the signifier to the apocalyptic trauma, in securing a niche between the undermined materiality of the signifier and the formidable weight of trauma could be built.

Albeit unfair, trauma does not fail to wreak havoc on the psyche of children, hence the term childhood trauma. This psychic raid robs, Reviere posits, the child of his/her nascent schemas, which are characterized by Bruhn as "expectations, rules, or axioms derived from past experience that the individual maintains about himself, others, and the world" (qtd. in Reviere 28). This loss is instantly followed or otherwise accompanied by further devastation inflicted upon the child's sense of self-image, adaptational skills, and flexibility. High on the agenda here and quite germane to Reviere's critical angle is the concept of "Soul Murder" put forth by Shengold who outlines the

concept of childhood trauma within the literary writings of seminal writers such as Dickens, Orwell and Kipling.

Murdered spiritually, these children, Shengold theorizes, will not develop the "ability to feel joy and love, as a separate person" (2). The aftermath of such a severe blow to the child's psyche will constantly overshadow his life in terms of concepts such as family, identity and safety. Despite the inherent or otherwise the environmentally acquired strength in some children who seem to grow out of such severe traumatization, some other children develop a self-destructive path which might culminate in suicidal tendencies. Given the traumatized child character in *The Road*, such exegeses, Reviere's and Shengold's trauma accounts in the main, will prove to be of significant contribution to the textual and visual analyses yet to be shaped in future chapters.

Trauma has constantly been prone to develop kinship with "the uncanny", whose inception principally belongs to Freud. This alliance has operated like a bridge that has fueled both realms with aesthetics, of a rather macabre type, which have ultimately given rise to the progress of both notions. Conceived by Freud through a landmark essay under the same title in 1919, the sentiment has mostly hinged upon anything that has to do with fear, ghosts, and suddenly unfamiliar feelings. However, in a broader sense, "the uncanny" can encompass elements such as repetition, animism, silence, death, fear of being buried alive, odd coincidences, double, telepathy, alienation, dismemberment, double, and castration.

The foregoing study will set out to expound on repetition as one of the quintessential elements of "the uncanny". Repetition has informed the central plank of the trauma discourse, as Caruth and Freud have incessantly referred to its significance in many fronts, not to mention the concept of "compulsion to repeat" illuminated earlier. This united arena is best acknowledged in the words of Whitehead:

> One of the key literary strategies in trauma fiction is the device of repetition, which can act at the levels of language, imagery or plot. Repetition mimics the effects of trauma, for it suggests the insistent return of the event and the disruption of narrative chronology or progression. Many writers, including Barker, Morrison and Sebald, repeat key descriptions or episodes from one novel to another, and this technique both suggests an underlying trauma and implicitly critiques the notion of narrative as therapeutic or cathartic. Freud's work on the uncanny reveals that even

> apparently innocuous daily objects and incidents can be drawn into an atmosphere of trauma. (86)

If the repetition of an "innocuous daily" deed instills uncanny fear in the heart of a person, what can be said of the type of the fear stemming from the repetition of Chigurh's cattle gun's hissing or plunging sound before punching a hole into the forehead of innocent victims, not to mention the repetition of his ominous ghostly spectral figure? All these will shape the plane on which the present study's analyses will be built in the ensuing chapters.

Death is another constituent of the uncanny spectrum whose color weight cannot be compared to that of other constituents. Ubiquitously felt everywhere, death is likened to a surreal entity which haunts whatever it lays its hands on, as Royle contends: "[t]here is a shade of surreal about the death drive and a shade of the death drive about surrealism" (97). This surreal sentiment of death has highly pervaded the fiction of the uncanny. The notion of alienation will not go unnoticed either, as it seems to sit well with the trauma tropes in instilling a sense utterly imbued with spectrality and defamiliarization. Given the horrifically high body of death and its surreal nature in the corpus narratives, an examination of its uncanny role within this study seems to be invariably essential. Chigurh's ghostly death-laden portrayal could be a significant embodiment of the surreal aesthetics to which "the uncanny" state of death has been attributed. This will perhaps formulate another relational mode of exegesis in the future chapters.

It would be facile to lose sight of the long-sought dialogue between trauma and ethics. Majorly taking its cue from Levinas's concept of the "face of the other", the present study will endeavor to exhibit how one could sense a strict sense of moral obligation for the very face of the individual one has barely witnessed. That the character of Moss in *No Country for Old Men* returns to the scene of massacre only to quench the thirst of the dying man, whose face he had barely seen, could be one of the instances by which the Levinasion insight of the "face of the other" could be corroborated. The same insight is problematized in Craps's writings which tend to offer a beacon of hope and redemption in the face of unforgiveable traumas.

All the aforementioned theoretical features will be argued in the first chapter irrespective of their relational mode with the novels and the films. Once this study approaches chapter two, all such established theoretical framework will operate as the stage upon which the textual and visual analyses will emerge. The analytical pattern in this study will stem from the novels, as points of

departure, towards the films, in which the corresponding trauma argument will find its converging or otherwise diverging instantiation. This pattern is by no means a system of prioritization by which one work (the novel) could be thought to take precedence over the other (the film). Nor is this a procedure through which the cliché-ridden concept of interdisciplinary loyalty between the two arts, namely literature and cinema, and the directorial efforts thereof could be assessed. Instead, this is only a pattern whose application is merely grounded in its facilitating power as the departure from the text to the image makes more sense once we wish to know the trauma delicacies and nuances, or the dialectics thereof, which are inscribed on the images and whether or not they correspond to those of the novels, not to mention the chronological considerations between the novels and the films. This, once more, is not a merit measuring exegesis.

Apart from this pattern and the impetus behind it, the foregoing study will operate on a particular selective basis, which means the study will merely focus on the traumatic moments of the novel and their corresponding visual images in the films. Not only will this selectivity provide the study with further consistency and pithiness, but it will also help the arguments to come to fruition in terms of a united centrality, which is but unravelling the concept of trauma in both media.

For instance, a good part of chapter two will revolve around the monologues of *No Country for Old Men* as the ground, suggested by this study, on which the testimonial criticism falls. Having delved into all the theoretical trauma features inherently felt in monologues, the chapter will then proceed toward the film *No Country for Old Men* and delineate how the Coen brothers have deployed their visual subtleties to portray the very same testimonial threads in the monologues. The uncanny traumatic moments of McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men*, in a similar vein, will be another instantiation of this pattern in which the study will take such textual moments as its departure point and will later veer in the direction of its visual moments in the film.

This study's apocalyptic chapter will abide by the same established pattern. Moving from the post-apocalyptic lines of McCarthy's *The Road* towards the disturbing pixels of John Hillcoats's adaptation, this chapter will aim at unravelling how the moments of trauma converge to or diverge from each other. For instance, having expounded on the traumatic staple of non-referentiality in McCarthy's words, which will occupy a major part of chapter three, the study will endeavor to shift its lens on how the aforementioned notion is visualized in Hillcoat's silver screen translation. The analytical thread of childhood trauma will be subject to the same pattern, which

means the staples of childhood trauma such as the loss of schemas, adaptive measures and self-image, as explicated earlier, will be showcased in the novel, and later investigated in Hillcoat's visual portrayal.

Chapter One – Trauma: From Haunting to Growing

"What does not kill me makes me stronger."

– Nietzsche, *Twilight of Idols*

"Scars have the strange power to remind us that our past is real."

– McCarthy, *All the Pretty Horses*

A Haunting Prologue

> Why the mass? Why the babel? Why the whispers? Why the wait?
> A woman is to be hung by the neck until she is dead and the largest square of the town is to take in the eager crowd of spectators. What a lesson it would teach. A pilgrimage.
> Susurrus dies down. The condemned has arrived. Is it fear? Is it shock? Which is prey? Which is predator? A moment of daze shared by both halts the world.
> The noose hungers. First click of a camera. The spell is broken. Chants erupt; remove the demon. Fingers point. The woman is led on. Voyeurs watch through hollow eyes. A child stares, absent-mindedly picking his nose, never blinking; what a way to go.
> The demon has reached the foot of the gallows. A set of thirteen steps is all that is left from life. To ascend is to be no more. The air grows staler with each step climbed. The howling of the crowd is breached by the macabre wailing of the soon-to-be-dead. Onlookers feast mutely upon the pleas of the demon.
> The noose is fed. The words of the irreversible condemnation are uttered. Illusion snaps. Life crumbles. Breath gives way with a long chain of snorts and squirms. The child is watching. As one heart slows down many others pace up. Thoughts shift. How long will the body dangle? How long will the taste of bone marrow linger? How long will the stench of lifeless float around? How long will the memory of the screeching voice amuse?
> Even after the removal of the token of justice, will the long shadow of the rope vanish? Will it be the same?
> Which is dead, the corpse on the rope or the remembering crowd? (an unpublished short story)

These are a few words, called a minimalist short story by some, I scribbled long ago upon witnessing the public hanging of a woman who had allegedly committed adultery. The scale of the traumatization this savagery left me with was beyond measure. There and then I realized what trauma could do to one's soul. The hanging woman's face never faded away from my memories, nor did the booing of the crowd. Albeit unpublished nominally, it published itself on the bedrock of my psyche.

Barely can one be privy to the mazes and labyrinths of trauma. Trauma betrays your principles, alienates your world-view, and shatters the sanctuary of your peace. That all this bitterness befalls the victim is what any trauma scholar would attest to; yet addressing the concept of trauma is tantamount to chasing an apparition. It fools you into believing it, still all you get is disillusionment. Its controversial nature knows no end. It taps on the un-tapped and it calls the un-called. Even writing on it is traumatic. In more ways than one, it tends to resist definition; yet in essence, it is instantiated anew every moment. Its mysteries, grandeur and awe have instilled life in the greatest literary works of the world. This resultant pervasiveness has afforded the concept of trauma not only a status of being a literary trend but also a full-fledged culture: "it has been turned into a repertoire of compelling stories about the enigmas of identity, memory and selfhood that have saturated Western cultural life" (Luckhurst 80). By the same token, Kirby Farrell contends, trauma is but "a cultural trope that has met many needs" (14).

In the light of the gruesome portrayal of the hanging scene I wittingly shaped the outset of my first chapter with, one might insinuate that a trauma story needs to solely rely on texts, of literary nature necessarily, yet this is not but a fallacy. Trauma fiction is not necessarily tied up with a certain medium, nor does it need to embody a certain oddity. It has already matured and mutated into a myriad of media, arts, and disciplines, as Nadal and Calvo point out: "[a]lthough at first trauma was mainly associated with extremely unusual events, it has now become a powerful and complex paradigm that infiltrates contemporary history, literature, culture and critical theory" (1).

Seeking a central or singular trauma for humanity is also frowned upon by Derrida. He is vividly at pains to warn us against discriminating between/among traumas of various weights, origins, and localities. In so doing, Derrida is adamantly insistent on inviting us to stand against the exclusive significance of some names such as Auschwitz or Holocaust in giving rise to the yardsticks by which the weight of the other so-called minor traumas could be measured. Briefly put, and in ways of avoiding any obfuscation, we need to distance ourselves from discrimination and singularity in dealing with the discourse of trauma and repudiate the unanimous privilege which certain Europeans bestow upon Auschwitz, hence refraining from eclipsing certain traumatic events "other than Auschwitz, ones which are just as abominable, names which have names and names which have no name" (qtd. in García Düttmann 99-100)". In other words, the

culture of singularity, not only from Derrida's position but also from any scholarly standpoint, has no place in the dialectics of trauma.

Cormac McCarthy's canon is putatively thought to manifest profound traces of trauma. The present project is targeted at employing the concept of trauma in unraveling Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* (2005) and *The Road* (2006), both of which made their way onto the screen under the same titles through the adaptational efforts of the Coen Brothers (2007) and John Hillcoat (2009), respectively. The above-cited works, be they textual or visual, were acclaimed critically. To name but a few, the novel *The Road* won the Pulitzer Prize and the film *No Country for Old Men* received four Academy Awards, including the Best Picture Award. All said, what unflinchingly consolidates the bond of each novel to the other or the two novels to their corresponding adaptations, I firmly argue, is the concept of trauma. Although trauma is irreducible to any certain taxonomy, I will, in an effort to fastidiously abide by my study objectives, make use of diverse trauma models in this chapter so that I can cogently lay the groundwork to develop my later arguments in the second chapter of this study, which will be dedicated to the analysis of the above-mentioned works.

Caruth: Incomprehensibility, Haunting, and Non-referentiality

When Caruth published her seminal book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, she might not have been aware of the train of events, or the extent thereof, she was setting in motion. One might have ventured the guess she was about to elaborate on Freud and perhaps move about the same circles or a notch or two up. Yet, she, wittingly or otherwise, breathed life into a whole new horizon in literary criticism and theory. Albeit occasionally perplexing and intricate, the book seems to majorly turn to Freud on many fronts. The present line of arguments tends to take their cue from the Freudian notion of traumatized history in *Moses and Monotheism*, which was the underlying theoretical framework for Caruth to introduce her first chapter "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History" in the mentioned book.

Rarely does a writer make a claim so bold as to defy the most commonly reiterated historical facts. Freud beats the odds, though. To him, what history has registered in regard to Moses is but a common fallacy nurtured by overheated figments of imagination. The truth lies elsewhere; where most of us have not had the courage to take a questioning look at. Moses was

not a Hebrew but an Egyptian. Even the thought of it might be traumatizing to some certain believers. In his account, Moses was an Egyptian who liberated the Hebrews from the tyranny of the Pharaoh (exodus) and returned them to Canaan. The liberator, however, met his demise in a rebellion at the hands of the very people whom he had unchained from the tyrannical reign of the Pharaoh. This account, as opposed to the biblical account, is appalling in many respects. Having slain their liberator, they were left with nothing but the sense of guilt, which gave rise to all the historically collective hatred towards the Jews, their race, and perhaps eventually the traumatizing events of Holocaust and Anti-Semitism[1], hence Freud avers: "[i]t seems that a growing feeling of guiltiness had seized the Jewish people and perhaps the whole of civilization of that time as a precursor of the return of the repressed material" (139).

How does Caruth then use this particular Freudian account in addressing the implication of her trauma theories? For this to be explicated, let us take a step back towards some fundamental notions. Cathy Caruth prefers to start her founding or defining words in the light of what Freud wrote in the third chapter of *Beyond Pleasure Principle*. Repetition of a traumatic event through dreams or nightmares, Caruth remarks, comes at the heart of Freud's understanding of trauma: "Perplexed by the terrifying literal nightmares of battlefield survivors and the repetitive reenactments of people who have experienced painful events, Freud wonders at the peculiar and sometimes uncanny way in which catastrophic events seem to repeat themselves for those who have passed through them" (1). Thus, the foundational component of a trauma, Caruth should remark relying on Freud, is the recurrent return of the traumatic event by which the psyche of the victim was wounded.

The wound is not a simple word and has to do with trauma again. In fact, trauma, in a terminological sense, is derived from the "Greek trauma, or wound, originally referring to an injury inflicted on a body" (3). As most of the elemental concepts in psychiatry stem from Freudian thoughts, Caruth prefers to refer to his words on this occasion as well. The physical wound which was mentioned earlier is meant to be more mental or abstract from Freud's position as Caruth sheds light on the matter writing "in Freud's text, the term *trauma* is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (3). The effect this wound has exerted on the mind is far more durable than that of a simple physical wound. Commencing his words with an example

[1] For a thorough account of the roots of anti-Semitism refer to Part III-Section I of *Moses and Monotheism*. Briefly put, the staple of this jealousy, says Freud, arises from the assumption that Jews were "the first born, favorite child of God" (147), hence superior to the other races.

in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud attempts to portray the gravity of the mental pain and torture in the character of Tancred in Tasso's romantic epic Gerusalemme Liberata:

> Its hero, Tancred, unwittingly kills his beloved Clorinda in a duel while she is disguised in the armour of an enemy k night. After her burial he makes his way into a strange magic forest which strikes the Crusaders army with terror. He slashes with his sword at a tall tree; but blood streams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, is heard complaining that he has wounded his beloved once again. (16)

This Freudian image in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, which was the referential basis for Caruth, is a solid indication of how a traumatic event constantly finds a way of coming back to its victim and how the haunting effect thereof will never cease throughout the victim's later life. The voice coming out of a tree is not only a reflection of a ghostly haunting effect trauma brings upon the victim, but also "the enigma of otherness of a human voice that cries out from the wound, a voice that witnesses a truth that Tancred himself cannot fully know" (3). The otherness of the voice and its repetitious appearance throughout the victim's life form a very peculiar amalgamation of components that make its very existential nature completely inaccessible and non-locatable, which is manifestly exhibited by Caruth in the Freudian example: "just as Tancred does not hear the voice of Clorinda until the second wounding, so trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past" (4).

Furthermore, the traumatic image is entirely repetitive as well as unintentional, whose nature I detailed in an essay entitled "Trauma and Mental Perversions in Dennis Lehane's *Shutter Island*": "[i]t is thus through a repetition of his unknowing act of slashing at the tree that the haunting phantasm of his wife forces into him a malicious shock of what he had earlier done to his beloved" (Sadeghzadegan et al, 39).

To further expound on the ghostly or haunting nature of trauma, one could exploit Wolfreys' words, the genesis of which is once more derived from the Freudian thoughts. Calling it a ghost, Wolfreys goes on to give trauma a "spectral" (133) feature that only leaves its mark without the victim's discernment. He does not fail to take heed of the "phantomatic or phantasmatic" (133) nature of the trauma, in that he turns to Althusser's words in elaborating on

the paradoxical nature of phantasm saying "something occurs . . . but nothing happens . . . everything is immobile" (qtd. in Wolfreys 134). Lastly, Wolfreys puts phantasm akin to the notion of symbol, that which "belongs to the order of apperception rather than perception" (134). Thus, the haunting trace of trauma, apart from its spectral characteristics, lands on a rather phantasm-centered province singled out solely by one's ability of apperception rather than perception.

Having shed light on some foundational terms and the very essence of a wound so grave as to be called trauma, I will now turn my attention towards trauma's socio-historical implication which was discussed earlier in regard to Caruth's pursuit of *Moses and Monotheism*. Is the traumatized history a denial of history? Can one rely on a historical account which stems from a traumatic event? Taking her cue from Freudian thoughts as well as her interpretational liberty, Caruth contends:

> For many readers, Freud's questioning of history─ his displacement of the story of a liberating return by the story of a trauma─ has seemed to be a tacit denial of history. By replacing factual history with the curious dynamics of trauma, Freud would seem to have doubly denied the possibility of historical reference: first, by himself actually replacing historical fact with his own speculations, and second, by suggesting that historical memory, or Jewish historical memory at least, is always a matter of distortion, a filtering of the original event through the fictions of traumatic repression, which makes the event available at best indirectly. (16)

A trauma-related history, in the words of Caruth relying on the thoughts of Freud, can never be reliable; the very same unreliability that rendered the famed Freudian accident[2] story unfathomed, if not for belatedness. The more one desires to ascertain the true essence of a trauma-oriented history, the more lost one gets in its course, since "[f]or history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (18). Whitehead does not fail to approach Caruth's view purporting, "[f]or Caruth, referential truth or experience is no longer opposed to fiction but is inextricable from it, providing the reader with

[2] Caruth uses the famous example of an accident illustrated by Freud in his book *Moses and Monotheism* to portray the analogy between the belated nature of the symptoms of the accident and the delayed appearance of Monotheism after the murder of Moses (Caruth 16-17).

radically new problems of interpretation and understanding" (13). Thus, with Caruth as one's paradigm, historical truth or the true history would be untenable, if not impossible.

Relevant and noticeable here would also be Siri Hustvedt's contentions in regard to Trauma's incapacity in being narrated: "Trauma has no narration" (par. 7), as traumatized people alter their perception of time.[3] To them, "once upon a time" becomes "once upon no time" (par. 7). In addressing the vaguely formed temporal nature of a trauma-oriented history, Hustvedt tactfully employs the term "amnesia": "History is made by amnesia. In the American Civil War, they called it soldier's heart, and over time it changed its name to shell shock, then war neurosis. Now it's PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder, the most antiseptic of the terms for people who witness the unspeakable" (par. 13). One cannot help but notice how both Hustvedt and Caruth are inclined to converge to the notion of unreliable history via using different terms such as "amnesia" and "inaccessibility" respectively.

In Hustvedt's logic, trauma creates its own narrative thread; one that becomes an utterly separate line of storytelling. Preserved on a different plane, "memories of war, rape, near-fatal accidents, and collapsing buildings aren't like other memories. They are kept separate in the mind" (par. 17). Trauma gives rise to its own plotline with its own rules and principles. Referring to her own novel *The Sorrows of an American*, Hustvedt, once more, reaffirms this particular position of trauma through the following words: "Trauma isn't part of the story; it is outside story. It is what we refuse to make part of our story" (51-52). On an analogous note, Ronell observes that, "trauma can be experienced in at least two ways . . . as a memory that one cannot integrate into one's own experience, and as a catastrophic knowledge that one cannot communicate to others" (313-314).

This integrating inability must be precisely what Baer terms a "twofold structural disjunction between an experience and its integration into narrative memory, understanding, and communicability" (10). The inability to incorporate the traumatic event into the memory, Baer proposes, is grounded in the fact that the traumatic memory lies "somewhere outside memory yet within the psyche" (10). What, however, can revitalize the devastated soul of the victim, or what is left of it, is the engagement with the poetic aesthetics of Baudelaire and Celan, hence the appellation *Remnants of Song: Trauma and the Experience of Modernity in Charles Baudelaire and Paul Celan* for his book. It is more than fascinating to observe how Baers's insight strikes a

[3] Hustvedt's argument here has its roots in the thoughts of two psychoanalysts named Francoise Davoine and Jean-Maxx Gaudillèrre. For a thorough understanding of their work, refer to their *History Beyond Trauma*.

chord with those of Housvedt and Ronell, not to mention the founding words of Caruth with the same centrality.

The selected narratives of this study are in passionate need of a temporality-oriented, if not time-referred, exploration. Time, history and narration make so little or otherwise vague sense, particularly in *The Road*, that one could feel the time has stood still. It is as if the more one is seeking out a historical reference, the more ambiguity beats him. Nobody could even venture a guess as to whether where, when and how the original trauma or the apocalypse has occurred and the trauma-oriented line keeps itself vaguely isolated. All such clues and dialogues between the traumatic notions and the temporal or historical perspectives, through which the narratives unfold, are the arguments I intend to demonstrate in chapter two of this project.

Haunting Flashbacks and Lacanian Real

The phenomenon of flashback is deemed to be one of the most pivotal components of trauma discourse. Albeit multifarious in nature, flashback constantly finds its link to the province of memory, remembrance and sensory perception. Hustvedt's account of traumatic flashback is as follows:

> The flashback is a fascinating form of traumatic remembering. In *The Shaking Woman or A History of My Nerves* I explore emotional memory and its relation to flashbacks, and my own experience of them after a car accident. Emotional memories appear to be processed differently in the brain from more pedestrian memories, which may explain the phenomenon of traumatic flashbacks. A neurobiological study conducted in 1996 on people who experienced flashbacks concluded that these memories are 'organized on a perceptual and affective level with limited semantic representation and tend to intrude as emotional or sensory fragments related to the original event with stability over time.' This is an elaborate way of saying that what returns in a flashback is remembered not through language but through emotion and sensation. (pars. 5-6)

Given this pithy account, flashbacks possess a rather sensory, be it visual or auditory, and emotional nature than linguistic. Then, how can one explain the profound body of all the words that a trauma victim refers to in coming to terms with his/her traumatic event? One could claim all those linguistic efforts are but at the service of portraying the visual or the emotional moments of the incurring of the trauma. Findings of Van der Kolk and Sapporta substantiate the same: "[t]hese experiences may then be encoded on a sensorimotor level without proper localization in space and time. They therefore cannot be easily translated into symbolic language necessary for linguistic retrieval" (qtd. in Hustvedt par. 9). In the words of Caruth, in a similar vein, flashbacks and their repetition can only be justified through "the absolute inability of the mind to avoid an unpleasurable event that has not been given psychic meaning" (59).

Perhaps another way to approach the concept of flashback in the rhetoric of trauma should be through negotiating the concept of "repetition compulsion" which originally belongs to Freud. In "Remembering, Repeating and Working-through" Freud famously argued that "the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he *repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" (150-51). He went on to call it the "compulsion to repeat". The force of repetition has been high on the critical agenda of trauma notions. Upon another occasion, Freud puts a spectral gloss over the way the traumatized patient/person strives to act out a repressed memory: "a thing which has not been understood inevitably reappears; like an unlaid ghost, it cannot rest until the mystery has been solved and the spell broken" (1975, 122). Similarly, in her introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, pioneering scholar Cathy Caruth employs the term "possession" to touch upon the same spectral aspect and then goes on to elaborate on another traumatic phenomenon called PTSD "in which the overwhelming events of the past repeatedly possess, in intrusive images and thoughts, the one who has lived through them. This singular *possession by the past* …." (151).

Of closest affiliation to the concept of spectrality, flashback and possession is the Lacanian "real".[4] Lacanian "real" has always been deemed mysteriously ambiguous: "Lacan never accurately describes the 'real': he seems to think of it as what lies beyond the world of signification, perhaps a primordial immediacy of experience prior to language or a chaotic condition of mere thinghood prior to objectivity. For Lacan, the real is the "impossible" (Habib 590). Lacan himself asks, "Where do we meet this real? For what we have in the discovery of psycho-analysis is an encounter, an essential encounter─ an appointment to which we are always called with a real that eludes us" (53). Then Lacan delves into how he opts for the word *tuché* to mean the same as an encounter with the real: "[f]irst, the *tuché*, which we have borrowed … from Aristotle, who uses it in his search for cause. We have translated it as *the encounter with the real*. The real is … the return, the coming-back, the insistence of the signs …." (53–54). One might look askance at the arguments developed so far wondering how this encounter or in better terms the encounter with the real goes rogue. On this Lacan contends:

> What is repeated, in fact, is always something that occurs─ the expression tells us quite a lot about its relation to the *tuché─ as if by chance* ….The function of the *tuché,* of the real as encounter─ the encounter in so far as it may be missed, in so far as it is essentially the missed encounter─ first presented itself in the history of psychoanalysis in a form that was in itself already enough to arouse our attention, that of the trauma. Is it not remarkable that, at the origin of the analytic experience, the real should have presented itself in the form of that which is *unassimilable* in

[4] The Lacanian triple order model is best outlined in the words of Habib in his comprehensive *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*:

> Lacan posits three orders or states of human mental disposition: the *imaginary* order, the *symbolic* order, and the *real*. The imaginary order is a pre-Oedipal phase where an infant is as yet unable to distinguish itself from its mother's body or to recognize the lines of demarcation between itself and objects in the world; indeed, it does not as yet know itself as a coherent entity or self. Hence, the imaginary phase is one of unity (between the child and its surroundings), as well as of immediate possession (of the mother and objects), a condition of reassuring plenitude, a world consisting wholly of images (hence "imaginary") that is not fragmented or mediated by difference, by categories, in a word, by language and signs. The mirror phase – the point at which the child can recognize itself and its environment in the mirror – marks the point at which this comforting imaginary condition breaks down, pushing the child into the symbolic order, which is the world of predefined social roles and gender differences, the world of subjects and objects, the world of language. (Habib 589)

> it─ in the form of the trauma, determining all that follows, and imposing on it an apparently accidental origin? (54–55)

Thus, through Lacan's lens, "real" is not only traumatic but also un-assimilable, hence its being missed and mysteriously non-existent. Inspired and humbled by the Lacanian "real", Hartman employs the concept of "real" to justify the dialectics of traumatic knowledge in his "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies":

> The real is not the real, in the sense of a specific, identifiable thing or cause; however specific it may be, it is also a burning idea, or its own "wake" of desire. The encounter with the real takes place, on the part of both analyst and analysand, within a world of death-feelings, lost objects, and drives. It might be described, in fact, as a 'missing encounter'… or an unmediated shock...(539)

Thus, "real" becomes real when it is missed, muffled and consequently silenced to the most elusive part of the person's psyche. Apart from its elusive and lost nature, "real" seems to be responsible for many more undertakings than one could imagine, "[i]t has the force of a reversal or interruption, of a peripety displacing one meaning by another, or which undoes the knot of signifier and signified that establishes signification" (Hartman 539). Albeit silenced, real can really voice the unvoiced, interrupt the uninterrupted and live beyond the lived: "to live as a piece of the real is to live beyond the limits of law of the signifier…" (539). To recap, "real" is emblematically controversial in that it is silently voiced, vaguely significant and unmentionably missed.

Hartman's Mute Visuality and Green's Secondary Thinking

Interviewed by Caruth, Hartman touches upon another thread of trauma rhetoric apropos of visuality and imagery. Taking his cue from Wordsworth's haunting poetry, he addresses how the poet's emphatic realization of "particular places" fascinated him:

> I was interested in how Wordsworth drew his stories and fictions out of his fascination with particular places. These highly charged images, I tried to show

> how the poet unblocked them, how he developed them. Many of them were ocular. Visuality was dominant within his sensory organization; and something, call it nature, call it an economic principle within sensory organization, pitted the other senses against the eye. Symbolic process, I said, was related to this undoing of images. (Caruth and Hartman 632)

Thus, the undoing of the images─ rather of an ocular nature─ could not have occurred without the extraordinary power of the nature. Later, Hartmen, however, brings up how the two concepts of individual imagery and visuality diverge from each other, stating "there is something powerfully abstract about visuality, in distinction from individual images. So you can fall in love with the visual, whereas you can't fall in love with obsessive images" (633).

Put another way, individual imagery can never be as aesthetically subjective as when it is enmeshed with the power of nature. Nature, one is to infer, is like the catalyst for the pictorial realization of the shocking images the person comes in contact with. In other words, "the movement from charged individual image to visuality is parallel to the movement from specific and haunting places to Nature. Nature is his most generous concept" (633). The haunting imagery of the individual, plainly put, is helped out or processed in the light of the generous help of nature. However, tragically enough, the leading character or the Boy of Winander[5], having arrived at dissonant voices from nature, or an epiphany as called by some, dies in his youth with the poet standing on his grave, as Wordsworth writes: "[m]ute, looking at the grave in which he lies" (line 422). Perhaps this is the moment of apocalypse as well, which is yet another realization achieved by Hartman, which could eventually relate to the present study in terms of traumatic events. Apocalypse, from his position, is a passive indifference leveled towards humans in a hyperbole:

> That if the human mind does not live fully, responsively, within nature, or nature does not respond to us, then the end-result, projected forward, is apocalyptic. The death is like a hyperbole of this moment, a hyperbolic act of an imagination that leaps down not up, taking off from a simple failure of response. Should this failure

[5] The major aesthetics of the Caruth's interview with Hartman are grounded in Wordsworth's Boy of Winander episode in Book 5 of *The Prelude*. Hartman seems to be inspired as well as humbled by the Romantic poetry and seems to have derived many of his traumatic sentiments through delving into Romanticism and the studies thereof.

> of response accelerate, then we will have no habitat, no mutuality of nature and the human mind. (635)

Muteness in Wordsworth's poetry, Hartman should note, is another contribution to the traumatic atmosphere of the poetic narrative. The boy moves obscurely from a point to another, seeking out even a more obscure response on the part of nature. He never utters a single word. The traumatic or the poetic is mute and the mute is traumatic. Silence is the key to the unraveling of the boy's character, as Hartman marks down: "[t]he problem that arises, then, is the way that poetic and exemplary moment is characterized: even though it is a poetic moment, it is also a moment of muteness" (636). In elucidating the muteness further, Hartman subtly offers the following:

> We go from muteness to muteness, even if it is a muteness described in words. That is, the Boy of Winander─ and this is one reason why we feel that the episode was meant to be paradigmatic of human development, and that the death came too soon─ is shown at the point where speech is still mimicry. He is not shown speaking, he makes a pastoral pipe with his hands, but this is not speech. He doesn't mimic speech, he mimics the owls, nature's sounds. And so you expect the question to be: how do you go from that stage to mature poetic speech? Yet The Prelude records the growth of the poet's mind, not of speech itself. You are given the pre-mature moment, then the mature moment, but the mature moment is like the pre-mature moment, because the pause is lengthened, and you are shown a silent poet. (636)

Thus, the poet takes us up on an odyssey─ of a mysteriously traumatic type─ towards the maturity of the mind with the catalyzing devices of muteness, visuality and nature, all of which are paramount elements integral to the analysis of the narratives of our corpus.

Muteness and flashback are indelibly enmeshed in the trauma thoughts of yet another pioneer psychoanalyst called André Green. As a psychoanalyst deeply inspired by Lacan, Green wrote about trauma at length. His prolific writing and academic contributions eventually earned him the membership in the dignified British psychoanalytic Society. The concept of "secondary thinking" is one of the most significant contributions Green made to psychoanalysis. Devoted to

the aesthetics of Green's "secondary thinking", Herman Rapaport writes a whole chapter entitled "Secondary Thinking: Dostoevsky's *Notes From Underground*" in the book *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory*. In order to perceive the concept of "secondary thinking", one, I suggest in the first place, had better turn to Green's own words in describing the two modes of thinking:

> Two temporalities are at work at the heart of conscious activity; one on the surface, following its course with the regularity that governs language, thus obeying the formation of linear linguistic sequences, according to a determined progression; the other, underlying the first, which seizes the opportunity of free association (none the less intelligible) to maintain a system of linking that is uncertain, changing, de-hierarchicised, de-categorised, more or less actualized, requiring [of the psycho-analyst] a different mode of listening (floating attention) guided by new referents organized in chains, according to the principle of pleasure/unpleasure or, beyond that, of the compulsion to repeat from the unconscious to the id which is in immediate contact with the preconscious. (qtd. in Rapaport 43-44)

Thus, the two lines of thinking called "linear" and "de-hierarchicised", Green believes, correspond to primary and secondary thinking respectively. What makes the secondary thinking distinct from the primary mode of thinking is its occasional dominance over the primary thinking when the trauma victim finds his/her position hard to bear, hence a sort of flashback or retroactive return to the event which traumatized him/her in the first place: "the secondary thinking becoming the more dominant line, even if it is the more freely associated, de-constituted, and uncertain of the discourses or languages" (Rapaport 44). This dominance aside, another angle which defines "secondary thinking" is how the trauma victim cannot reveal the unsaid, even though he/she goes through an ordeal of doing so, which is noted by Green: "[t]he more the analysand speaks, the more he says; the more he speaks without quite saying entirely what he has on his mind, the more he says and reveals that there are things he is not saying" (qtd. in Rapaport 44).

Thus, the victim reveals a part of his psyche, yet the other part, which is somewhat amiss, remains silent: "[t]he positivity of what is said and the negative of what is silence" (6) are in constant battle. Therefore, what we have herein is, in essence, an amalgamation of

presence/absence, negative/positive and saying/not saying. This is not but a total decline of a victim's psyche towards an irrevocably elusive and fragmented silence. The resultant silence, as Green notes, has in part to do with the break-down of the victim's discourse in his/her flashbacks to the very event of the trauma: "[secondary thinking] threatens to break the thread of the discourse" (qtd. in Rapaport 45). Should the concept of "secondary thinking" come down to one phrase or term, it should be but the inability to utter something when it has already happened on a traumatic plane. Perhaps, the term "beta bits", coined by the renowned British Psychoanalyst Bion, can pave the way towards a better mastery of the concept of "secondary thinking". "Beta bits" are "split off psychotic elements that don't link in order to form coherent and consistent thinking" (Rapaport 44). These bits, Bion argues, serve as the "gaps in patient's discourse", which could be related to anybody or anything without making any sense.

Narratives of our corpus exhibit manifest traces of the traumatic notions of muteness and visuality. The corpus plots seem to staunchly rely on the aesthetics of silence and interpretation of images. This acquires further significance once the omnipresent flashbacks and the visual decoding of nature─ specifically in *The Road*─ through the characters' steering past each and every ruin come to the fore. Put briefly, the narratives and the characters are likely to be constituted by the aforementioned aesthetics and notions whose unraveling will come to light in chapter two.

LaCapra: Absence and Loss

It is impossible to write a full account of trauma discourse and not take heed of Dominick LaCapra's seminal essay "Trauma, Absence, Loss". Unfolding his essay with TRC[6] , Post-apartheid South Africa, and Post-Nazi Germany as a prelude, he is deliberately quick to single out the delicate distinction(s) between loss and absence. Truth laid bare, the more one conceives of drawing a distinguishing line between the two concepts, the more anguish one will be in. Indeed,

[6] Truth and Reconciliation Commission served the South African Justice system as a Post-Apartheid forum to listen to the voice of the victims and the human right violations which occurred during the pertinent era. It is the preference of this project to resort to LaCapra's judgment apropos the mission of this Commission:

> Truth and Reconciliation Commission was in its own way a trauma recovery system. Its awe-inspiring and difficult, if not impossible, project was to provide a quasi-judicial setting in which the truth was sought and some measure of justice rendered (at least retrospectively) in a larger context where former victims were now rulers who were trying to find ways and means of reconciling themselves with former rulers and at times with perpetrators of oppression. (696)

LaCapra himself revealed the very agonizing blur between the two: “still the distinction between absence and loss cannot be construed as a simple binary because the two do indeed interact in complex ways in any concrete situation and the temptation is great to conflate one with another” (700).

Seemingly, LaCapra is more vexed by the conflation of these two concepts than demarcating one from the other, yet in an effort to set them apart from one another, he contends that absence is trans-historical whereas loss is historical. “The historical past is the scene of losses that maybe narrated….reactivated, reconfigured and transformed in the present of the future” (700). Absence knows no time and chronicles nothing, whereas loss is an indispensible component of the historical past. Furthermore, losses are more specific and address particular events in history, be they individual as in the murder of a loved one or collective as in Holocaust or world wars. By contrast, absence tends to refer to the entities that one has never had in the first place, as LaCapra maintains: “in terms of absence, one may recognize that one cannot lose what one never had” (701). It is thus safe to infer that absence has to do with “ultimate foundations in general, notably metaphysical grounds” (701). Absences might be thought to be more holistic than losses.

With this stance in mind, once can take a step closer to the very agitating worries LaCapra has in terms of conflating these two notions. Apropos of this conflation, LaCapra holds:

> When absence is converted into loss, once increases the likelihood of misplaced nostalgia or utopian politics in quest of a new totality or fully unified community. When loss is converted into (encrypted in an indiscriminately generalized rhetoric of) absence, one faces the impasse of endless melancholy, impossible mourning, and interminable aporia in which any process of working-through the past and its historical losses is foreclosed or prematurely aborted. (698)

Later elsewhere, LaCapra maintains that melancholic agitation and paralysis stem from the conflation of absence and loss. Once the individual or the society is melancholic or mentally paralyzed, LaCapra warns, the thoughts of a ubiquitous trauma strikes every single individual in the community allowing them to think in terms of trauma culture: “one encounters the dubious ideas that everyone is a victim, that all history is trauma, or that we all share a pathological public sphere or a wound culture” (712). This culture of trauma may consequently lead to the inclusion

of the individuals who did not go through the same traumas, hence overshadowing their collective identity, about which LaCapra shed light: "[c]onflation of absence and loss would facilitate the appropriation of particular traumas by those who did experience them, typically in a movement of identity formation that makes invidious and ideological use of traumatic series of events in foundational ways or as symbolic capital" (712). Then, what approach should be adopted to come to terms with the absence/loss dichotomy, or perhaps lack[7], and not be doomed to a collective trauma culture? LaCapra responds:

> Historical losses can conceivably be avoided or, when they occur, at least in part compensated for, worked through, and even to some extent overcome. Absence, along with the anxiety it brings, could be worked through only in the sense that one may learn to live better with it and not convert it into a loss or a lack that one believes could be made good, notably through elimination or victimization of those to whom blame is imputed. Conversely, it is important not to hypostatize particular historical losses or lacks and present them as mere instantiations of some inevitable absence or constitutive feature of existence. (712)

Thus, LaCapra is at pains to urge one to "work through" loss and to convert "absence" to a less anxiety-provoking entity. At issue here, the nuances of the absence/loss aside, is the anxiety which originates from the aftermath of such traumas. Anxiety, LaCapra infers in the light of Freudian dicta, has a mysterious indefinite nature, hence its analogy with absence. In a similar vein, anxiety brings an air of not knowing what to fear: "[t]here is no particular thing to fear. And Anxiety─ the elusive experience or affect related to absence─ is a fear that has no thing (nothing) as its object" (707). Thus, for one to conquer this absence-oriented sense of anxiety, one needs to locate a specific thing or entity by which this fear could be generated and consequently find ways of eliminating or mastering the same fear. Put another way, one needs to provide oneself with a definite source of fear to elude the elusive absence-oriented anxiety. This route, remarks LaCapra,

[7] The term lack enters LaCapra's discourse in association with loss. Put briefly, lack is the present mode of loss: "Loss is often correlated with lack, for as loss is to the past, so lack is to the present and future. A lost object is one that may be felt to be lacking, although a lack need not necessarily involve a loss. Lack nonetheless indicated a felt need or a deficiency; it refers to something that ought to be there but is missing" (703). Lack, LaCapra cautions, should not be utilized synonymously with loss as the same is advised not to happen in the case of loss and absence.

can be paved through the transformation of absence to loss. This pathway renders the indefinite defined, the elusive clarified and the mystery debunked, as the author further notes:

> The conversion of absence to loss gives anxiety an identifiable object─ the lost object─ and generates the hope that anxiety may be eliminated or overcome. By contrast the anxiety attendant upon absence may never be entirely eliminated or overcome but must be lived with in various ways… in converting absence to loss, one assumes that there was (or at least could be) some original unity, wholeness, security, or identity which other have ruined, polluted, or contaminated and thus made 'us' lose. (707)

Thus, apart from locating a certain identifiable source of fear, one has to, LaCapra says, find the others "who made us lose" and eliminate them. Put plainly, in order for one to come to terms with one's absence-centered anxiety, one needs to annihilate the specific source and eradicate the sinful others respectively to master the anxiety and to regain the wholeness or unity of identity. If one decided to do otherwise, namely to treat absence as absence, the result will entail the "empowering possibilities in the necessarily limited, non-totalizing, and non-redemptive elaboration of institutions and practices in the creation of a more desirable, perhaps significantly different─ but not perfect or totally unified─ life in the here and now" (707). This process will then generate nothing but ambivalence both in terms of anxiety and empowerment.

Acting Out /Working Through

Of closest pertinence and prominence here is the concept of "acting out" and "working through" to which Freud was credited and for which he was consequently famed.[8] To Freud, the traumatized patient is incarcerated within the prison of his/her repeating the traumatic event(s), hence the term "compulsion": "As long as the patient is in the treatment, he cannot escape from this compulsion

[8] The staples of the Freudian notion of "acting out/working through" were developed through an essay which initially appeared under the title of "Remembering, Repeating, and Working through" in 1914. Since then, many thinkers have touched upon the concept in the light of their own preferences and liberties, hence the ubiquity of the term "acting out" over "repetition" by Freudian predecessors or other pioneer thinkers in the field. Freud, however, opted for the term "repeating/repetition" over "acting out" in the mentioned essay.

to repeat; and in the end we understand that this is his way of remembering" (2001, 150). The compulsion to repeat, Freud theorizes, does not have to take the shape of words only, instead "[the patient] repeats everything that has already made its way from the sources of the repressed into his manifest personality-his inhibitions and unserviceable attitudes and his pathological character-traits. He also repeats all his symptoms in the course of the treatment" (151). By dint of the aforementioned repetition, the patient might eventually pave his/her way towards a better understanding of the trauma(s), thereby allowing the moment of "working-through" to step in: "[o]ne must allow the patient time to become more conversant with this resistance with which he has now become acquainted, to *work through* it, to overcome it, by continuing, in defiance of it, the analytic work according to the fundamental rule of analysis" (155). The psychoanalyst has no other choice than be patient here, as "[t]his working-through of the resistances may in practice turn out to be an arduous task for the subject of the analysis and a trial of patience for the analyst" (155). The course of therapy, Freud warns, can neither be avoided nor hastened.

The implications of the above-mentioned Freudian concept have been somewhat dense and compelling. Many thinkers, LaCapra at their epicenter, have referred to them in more ways than one. Perhaps the pithiest description of "acting-out/working through" LaCapra put forth could be captured in the following lines:

> I would also distinguish in non-binary terms between two additional interacting processes: acting-out and working-through, which are interrelated modes of responding to loss or historical trauma. … I have argued elsewhere that mourning might be seen as a form of working-through, and melancholia as a form of acting-out. Freud compared and contrasted melancholia with mourning. He saw melancholia as characteristic of an arrested process in which the depressed, self-berating, and traumatized self, locked in compulsive repetition, is possessed by the past, faces a future of impasses, and remains narcissistically identified with the lost object. Mourning brings the possibility of engaging trauma and achieving a reinvestment in, or recathexis of, life that allows one to begin again. (713)

From LaCapra's position, which is completely indebted to and analogous with the Freudian model, one could aim for an impasse or otherwise a revival relying respectively on "acting out" and

"working through". A mourned trauma, as opposed to a stalled trauma, has, nonetheless, a better chance of a promised life, regeneration and "re-cathexis". Elsewhere, LaCapra employs the concept to develop another thread of argument apropos a type of revitalization or collective re-contextualization of trauma via resorting to working-through:

> Through memory-work, especially the socially engaged memory work involved in working-through, one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recognize something as having happened to one (or one's people) back then that is related to, but not identical with, here and now. Moreover, through mourning and the at least symbolic provision of a proper burial, one attempts to assist in restoring to victims the dignity denied them by their victimizers. (713).

Mourning, LaCapra vividly suggests, opens the gates of emancipation, redemption, recontextualisation of community whose members would have otherwise suffered from a permanent dereliction leading to an ensuing trauma culture; a culture whose irreversible nature cannot be remedied whatsoever. Moreover, the "socially engaged" can help prevent this nascent loss from converting to a mysterious ever-lasting absence by virtue of mourning or working through: "[o]ne would … help prevent the indiscriminate generalization of historical trauma into the idea of a wound culture or the notion that everyone is somehow a victim (or, for that matter, a survivor)" (722).

LaCapra's position apropos working-through and his disapproval of the Caruthian jargon[9] in this respect is staunchly substantiated by Craps's words: "Dominick LaCapra … a trauma scholar more directly interested in transformative political practice, has expressed some misgivings about what he perceives as Caruth and Felman's excessive fixation on the symptomatic acting-out of trauma, which threatens to inhibit action in the present oriented to a more desirable future" (11). The same sentiment pervades Kaplan's words when she states, "I understand and appreciate the criticism of Caruth's insistence on the 'unspeakability' and 'unrepresentability' of trauma: I will argue that telling stories about trauma, even though the story can never actually

[9] Caruthian jargon is meant to address the superiority of the impossibility, incomprehensibility, and the "acting-out" nature of trauma over the possibility of trauma being worked through.

repeat or represent what happened, may partly achieve a certain 'working through' for the victim" (37).

Perhaps another grave consequence of not working the trauma through should be how the victim finds himself/herself at the mercy of images and symbols once acting-out overwhelms his/her soul. In this respect, Onega and Ganteau posit:

> Unable to narrativise the traumatic experience in logical terms, the subject gives expression to his or her trauma by means of sensorial images instead of words. Unlike words, sensorial images are emotionally charged and symbolic, so that when they emerge from the unconscious during the process of acting out, they are experienced by the subject as overwhelming and incomprehensible. (3)

LaCapra's words do not fall afar here. The author, however, involves the concept of violence in relation to symbolization as well. Violence, says LaCapra, will overcome the psyche of the victims or the survivor once the symbolizing cannot be done optimally or "[i]n other words, violence in unmediated form may be more likely when there are no accepted or legitimized modes of symbolizing difference and conflict in an effective manner that enables them to be addressed and to some extent dealt with" (709). What best recaps all this thread of argument is the widely-appreciated line by Žižek: "In order to cope with a trauma we symbolize" (qtd. in Wolfreys 126).

In his book *On Belief*, Žižek does mention how both psychoanalysis and the religious tradition ought to cherish the hard-learned lesson of resorting to the province of symbolization: "Man is not simply overwhelmed by the impact of the traumatic encounter─ as Hegel put it, but is able to 'tarry with the negative,' to counteract its destabilizing impact by spinning out intricate symbolic cobwebs. This is the lesson of both psychoanalysis and the Judeo–Christian tradition"(47). Having composed *Slavoj Žižek: A Critical Introduction,* Parker quotes him writing that "trauma has no existence of its own prior to symbolization; it remains an anamorphic entity that gains its consistency only in retrospect, viewed from within a symbolic horizon" (qtd. in Parker 68).

In another reading of the famed dichotomy of "acting-out/working through", Louwagie, in her "The Ethical Stance of Testimony: Memory Politics and Representational Choices", discerns two vividly opposing camps whose members are at complete odds:

> The first type of memory politics tends to an all-or-nothing logic. Most critics situated in this category ban representation in order to avoid totalizing narratives and defend─ in an equally absolute way─ the radical alterity of the Holocaust. Caruth, for instance, refutes any process of "working through," because she identifies narrative with a 'full' and 'stable' interpretation….The second type of memory tends to replace the 'hyperbolic' all-or-nothing logic by a partial or progressive approach of the events. It is more particularly based on an intensive processing of the events- defined in terms of working through, contextualization and dialectical démultiplication. This dialectical perspective, however, is not perceived as the way to total redemption. (15)

Although this graphic taxonomy converges with all the threads of the analyses this study has put forth so far, it manages to disillusion, if not cripple, our thoughts in one particular facet; and that is not but the road to emancipation. Redemption, from the position of LaCapra and his proponents, seems to be feasible once the process of "working-through" is completed. However, redemption, Louwagie's research illuminates, is unattainable. At odds with Louwagie, Stampfl urges us to hope for the positive traces of trauma which ennobles the character of the character through instilling resilience in them:

> The resilience of some individuals in the face of disaster, and the vulnerability of others, even with respect to triggering events that do not seem especially dire, seems to carry the idea of wound far from the context of the relatively objective cut or concussion. The idea of resilience introduces uplifting themes to the study of trauma. Along these lines, ideas of rebirth or redemption come into play, ideas which exceed the concept of recovery defined merely as the return of normal functioning. (136)

What best captures the soul of this heated debate is made manifest in Nietzsche's famed dictum, "[f]rom the military school of life.─ What does not kill me makes me stronger" (33), the very same quote which appeared in the guise of an epigraph to this chapter.

Do the narratives of our study suffer from absence or loss or both? Has the conflation between the two modes occurred in any of the narratives? Do the characters opt for "acting-out" or "working-through"? How do the corpus narratives turn to symbols? All the dialectics of "absence and loss" and the intellectual products thereof, in more ways than one, find their way to the very epicenter of not only the narrative nuances but also the elegant thematics and motifs of the novels and the films of our selected canon. Chapter two of this research will attempt to address the mentioned issues.

Testimony: Listening, Speaking, and Survival

Release from or response to trauma has set in motion another thought current termed "testimony" in critical trauma studies. The term is indebted to the efforts of Shoshana Felman through her seminal book *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1991) co-authored by the renowned psychoanalyst Dori Laub. The two ushered in the new redeeming voice of testimonial criticism; the voice without which many traumatic voices would have been left unheard. For an initial yet transparent illustration of the concept of testimony, it is imperative that one turn to the very words of Felman and Laub who believe the most paramount staple of traumas in the history was the Second World War whose quintessential role in trauma dynamics is still tangibly felt:

> The major texts, films and documents submitted to the scrutiny of this book . . . (Camus' novels, de Man's essays, the poetic project of Celan, videotaped Holocaust testimonies, and the film *Shoah* by Claude Lanzmann) were all written and produced subsequent to the historic trauma of the Second World War, a trauma we consider as the watershed of our times and which the book will come to view not as an event encapsulated in the past, but as a history which is essentially *not over*, a history whose repercussions are not simply omnipresent (whether consciously or not) in all our cultural activities, but whose traumatic consequences are still *evolving* . . . in today's political, historical, cultural and artistic scene. (xiv)

Then, the Second World War, from Felman and Laub's angle, is not only unfinished but it has also launched many other sagas of traumatic aftermath whose effect has but lingered on to the present time. It is through the act of bearing witness to all the brutalities and atrocities of historical traumas that one can allow the testimony to come alive. This is substantiated by the words of Elissa Marder, "testimony (here understood as the act of bearing witness to traumatic events) is a necessary and vital response to the ongoing consequences of traumatic history" (3). Wolfreys's angle seems to contribute to the same path, "[t]estimony, in order to be such, cannot be calculated, for every testimony must respond to the singular specificity of the traumatic experience" (130). In a similar vein, and putting on a pedestal Shoah[10], Hartman asserts, "Witnessing, moreover, cannot take place without some hope in the future, in generational transmission. Perhaps all writing presupposes this hope-the manuscript in a bottle as well as the buried milk canisters…" ("Shoah", 48).

At the very heart of testimonial criticism comes the act of listening. On a Caruthian or conventional note, traumas are essentially unfinished and ubiquitous and they will recur in ways one can never ascertain. Testimonial criticism, however, is aimed at the very release of or recovery from this Caruthian enduring dereliction. This so-called emancipation comes at the hands of listening; "[but] the most urgent and essential claim of *Testimony* is to show that even though we do not 'recover' from our traumatic past, nor can we 'cure' it, 'overcome' it, or even fully understand it, we can and we must *listen* to it and *survive* it by listening to its effects as they are transmitted to us through the voices of its witnesses and survivors" (Marder 4).

Speaking, notes Marder, should be the other pivotal piece of Felman's spectrum in shaping her testimonial scrutiny:

> Because bearing witness entails speaking in the first person in order to attest to a truth that can only be validated through the very act of speaking itself, testimony places the speaker in a unique and difficult position. By responding to an ethical, political, moral, or even unconscious imperative that compels someone to take up the position of the witness (that is, to put oneself in the place of truth by 'telling the

[10] This is a seminal documentary visualizing the most ruthless brutalities of Holocaust to the best of its abilities. Directed by Lanzman, the documentary has been one of the most oft-cited examples in the realm of trauma studies in the last twenty years. Inspired by its authentic aesthetics and its intense insights, Hartman composed a seminal essay titled "Shoah and Intellectual Witness" concerning the events visualized in this documentary.

> truth'), the person who assumes the burden of that truth often does so at great personal risk. (4)

Thus, testimony exiles the witness to a solitude whose components are constituted by the acts of listening and speaking. This solitude, nonetheless, does not belong to the witness. Indeed, what alienates this solitude is that which alienates the truth. The more the witness exposes himself/herself to the truth, the more he/she discerns the truth does not belong to him/her, notwithstanding all the hard-earned listening and speaking: "[t]ruth does not belong to the speaker, the listener, or the empirical, material world. But by understanding testimony as a medium through which truth can be transmitted, Felman's work enables us to be attuned to the truths transmitted by trauma even as those very truths may not be entirely 'knowable'objects…" (Marder 4). Thus, Felman exhorts us to listen to the voices of the dead inasmuch as it heralds a future unchained from its traumatized past:

> Felman's notion of testimony teaches us that we must open our ears, hearts, and minds to the voices of the dead as they continue to speak through the voices of the surviving witnesses. She also shows that in opening ourselves to these voices from the past that live in the present, we may also be able to open ourselves to the possibility of a future that might escape being overly determined by, or ensnared in, the (unwitting) traumatic repetitions of its (unknown) traumatic past. (Marder 4).

All the dark dimensions of trauma render the healing process barely viable. Nevertheless, many victims or survivors have diverged from the regressive paths succeeding at having the harsh aftermath ebb away gradually. One approach to arrive at this maturity is via shaping a narrative or a story out of the traumatic event. Albeit irreversibly horrifying, any event, Hustvedt argues, can be narrated as a story with cobwebs of fiction spun around it:

> When horror can be articulated and told as a story, no matter how terrible the story is, it becomes part of an autobiographical narrative, and as such, it has already changed character. It has become a willed repetition rather than an automatic and/or

> hidden one. It has gained a temporal, narrative reality, one we share with others, something made possible by our reflective self-consciousness. (par.1)

The most heinous atrocities befalling a victim, Hustvedt maintains, could be coped with insofar as one spins a web of time, space and conscious narration. Elsewhere further on, she is not afraid to cite herself as a living example of this conscious narration: "Writing about my shaking did not cure me of the symptom, but it did give me a greater sense of control and agency" (par. 33). The sense of agency Hustvedt speaks of seems to be tantamount to the sense of self-consciousness or perhaps awareness; precisely the sentiment which victims, bereft of narration or narrative, are deprived of. The agency fostered in her by narrating her own traumas allowed her not only to come to terms with her own trauma but it also rendered her aware of her weaknesses, hence the sentence "I am the shaking woman" at the end of the novel. One, now, can see through the Hartman's logic in stating "[t]he talking cure is also a homeopathic cure and literature could be viewed as a talking cure to a higher degree" (Hartman, "Trauma Within the Limits of Literature", 259). The very same concept does not escape the critical thoughts of Modell who juxtaposes the therapeutic essence of the narrative with the tool of metaphor[11] stating,

> In considering the therapeutic action of psychoanalysis, we believe that metaphor contributes to what can be viewed as a self-reinforcing loop. … metaphor is central to the communication and interpretation of unconscious meaning. One therapeutic effect of making the unconscious conscious is the creation of new meanings that expand the sense of the agency of the self. (10)

Through an analogous angle, J. Edward Mallot purports, "talking benefits the victim by beginning the emotional processing of events; hearing one testimony may encourage others to step forward" (23).

[11] The concept of metaphor is famously thought, by Brooks and some other trauma analysts, to be closely intertwined with the way a victim can cope with the aftermath of a trauma: "Narrative operates as metaphor in its affirmation of resemblance, in that it brings into relation different actions, combines them through perceived similarities …, appropriates them to a common plot, which implies the rejection of merely contingent (or unassimilable) incident or action" (Brooks 91).

All this testimonial hope entailing terms such as cure, therapy, sense of agency which are deemed to be the outgrowth of narrativisation (acts of listening and speaking) or story telling bearing the weight of eminent scholars such as Hustvedt, Hartman and Modell, along with my arguments on symbols mentioned earlier indebted to LaCapra and Žižek, work in tandem with the aesthetics of the concept of "working-through" originally employed by Freud and his re-reading successors. The corpus narratives in this project signal the aforementioned dynamics significantly. In *The Road*, for instance, the characters literally speak and listen to the dead nature in ways of grappling with what, they might even disbelieve, has happened. All these relational modes of analysis will come to the fore in chapter two.

Of inherent affinity here is the notion of survival. One could cogently argue that all the testimonial aesthetics and dynamics are mostly, if not solely, targeted at the ultimate path of survival; something perhaps all trauma victims strive for. This should be the reason why Laub and Podell bestow the title of "Art of Trauma" on the very act of survival: "survival itself should be considered as a type of art of trauma" (991). Stressing the role of "internal other" as the locus for all the personal memories, they go so far as to claim that the loss of the "internal other" is tantamount to the disappearance of the representation: "[w]ithout this internal other, there can be no representation" (991).

Interestingly enough, the only "antidote to the annihilation of the 'internal' other, Laub and Podell argue, is the "witnessing presence created in the art of trauma" (991). Considering "witnessing and emptiness" as a double locus for art of trauma, they contend that it is only through a present dialogue with the traumatic past that the victim could approach the empty core of trauma: "In essence it is only through its indirect and dialogic nature that the art of trauma can come close to representing the emptiness at the core of trauma while still offering the survivor the possibility of repression and repossession" (993). To recap, art of trauma liberates the victim, shapes a dialogue with the past, and transcends the psyche of the victim to come to terms with the trauma, hence a successful survival.

Alluding frequently to Celan's poetry, Laub and Podell elevate the art of poetry as the medium or art which effectively mirrors the empowering means of not only conversing with the past but also seeking out the trace of survival. It is not a coincidence that Baer, too, relies on the unparalleled power of poetry, Celan in particular, to delineate how a poetic engagement, or a dialogue to recall Laub and Podell, can allow the trauma victim to come to terms with the

unresolved experience, hence a successful survival. Then, "considering the poetic representation of unresolved experience" (9), is the redemption many trauma victims yearn for. In another analogous reading, and relying on the views of Judith Herman, Suleiman states, "[w]hatever camp one is in, finally, I think it is important to understand that trauma is not only a drama of a past event, but also, even primarily, a drama of survival" (280).

The literary convention of survival proceeding from the testimonial discourse of trauma cannot be disregarded if one is to do justice to the analysis, be it thematic or methodic, of the narratives chosen for this research. Survival, I propose, takes the central stage in both narratives, particularly in *The Road*. The detailed nuances of the act of survival in the corpus narratives hinging on the testimonial discourse will be the arena I will be exploring in chapter two of this study.

Belatedness

A brief survey of the concept of belatedness or latency in trauma is what I wish to lean towards at this juncture. At the risk of sounding repetitive, the current study has to reiterate Caruth's reference to Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*. In order to lay the groundwork for the premise, Caruth commences her argument with the renowned example of the accident about which Freud wrote a great deal. Going through what Freud terms "traumatic neurosis"[12], the victim might survive the aftermath of the accident. Rendering this story consonant with that of Jewish monotheism, Freud is bound to draw an interface between the two accounts, which is the latency. The same way the accident victim was doomed to go through a latency period to truly come to terms with the nature of the accident, the Moses slayers were doomed to go through such a long span of time, "during which no trace is to be found of the monotheism idea" (Freud qtd. in Caruth17), as to eventually be receptive of the return of monotheism. What adds to the gravity of the case is that the victim never grasped the accident while happening and it was not until a while later that the victim grows a sense of cognition regarding the accident, hence the term belatedness:

[12] This refers to a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms experienced by the victim whose first emergence does not happen before what is also termed "incubation period" (Caruth 1996, 16-17). Needless to say, the kinship between the term and any infectious disease should be the ground on which the appellation most likely hinges.

> In his use of the term latency, the period during which the effects of the experience are not apparent, Freud seems to compare the accident to the successive movement in Jewish history from the event to its repression to its return. Yet what is truly striking about the accident victim's experience….is not so much the period of forgetting that occurs after the accident, but rather the fact that the victim of the crash was never fully conscious during the accident itself. (Caruth 17)

Caruth contends that the repetition of the traumatic experience solely hinges upon its first forgetting, and that is the true power of trauma. Thus, the traumatic event is not fully comprehended at the very time it occurs and is instead forgotten only to be restored in a later time and another place: [a]nd it is this inherent latency of the event that paradoxically explains the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness, of the Jews' historical experience" (17). As the murder of Moses is too much to take at the time of its occurrence, the event has to connect itself to "another place, in another time" (17), hence its belated nature. History, particularly of trauma, Caruth infers, is "grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (17). Put briefly, a traumatic history is either belated or inaccessible, neither of which, this study suggests, is reliable. It is most apt if one refers to the words of Whitehead in interpreting Caruth's insight:

> Caruth's insistence on the inherent belatedness of experience and understanding challenges the notion of a straightforward textual referentiality. If history is characterised by its continually delayed or deferred entrance into experience, as Caruth suggests, then there is a need to profoundly rethink the modes of our engagement with the past. History is no longer available as a completed knowledge, but must be reconceived as that which perpetually escapes or eludes our understanding. (13)

The belated nature of trauma has reverberated through many pioneer trauma thinkers' thought streams. If one aims to do justice to the notion of belatedness, one cannot do so without recourse to the analytical views of Jean Laplanche.[13]. In a seminal interview with Laplanche,

[13] A leading French thinker and a pioneer psychoanalyst whose dynamic contribution to the rereading, and perhaps completing, of Freud's notions in miscellaneous respects mainly sexuality is widely appreciated. What, indeed, he is famed for is but his revisionist attitude toward Freudian Seduction Theory.

Caruth, in ways of seeking an acknowledgement for her own grasp of Laplanche's attitude towards belatedness, shares with him, "you say that in order to be psychic the memory of the original implantation must be revivified. In your written work, you describe this relation between the original moment and its revivification in terms of *Nachträglichkeit*" (Caruth and Laplanche 11). Setting forth the translated term as the belatedness, Caruth further asks him for his favored alternative of the term, to which Laplanch responds somewhat hilariously: "We translate *Nachträglichkeit* in French as *après*coup, and in English I have proposed that it be translated as 'afterwardsness,' which is now gaining acceptance. After all, the English language can use such words with 'ness.' I read something about 'whitehatedness,' so why not afterwardsness?" (12).

Acknowledging the words of Caruth apropos her version of understanding Laplanche's belatedness─ the original moment of trauma until the revivification thereof─ Laplanche opts for the term "afterwardsness", whose distinguishing lines are later illuminated, which do not come high on this project's agenda presently. Some pages towards the middle of the interview, Caruth and Laplanche both intersect at a point whose underlying essence is that which concerns the unknown temporal facet of the trauma: "[s]o to understand the truly temporal aspect of *Nachträglichkeit*, or afterwardsness, you have to take into account what is *not* known, both at the beginning, *and* later. What is radically not known" (18). To recapitulate, "afterwardsness" of trauma, Caruth and Laplanche concur accordingly, includes something "uninterpreted or unassimilated" (22).

Modell's interrogation of belatedness, too, does not fall short of pertinence herein. Directing our attention towards how Freud "referred to the retranscription of memory as *Nachträglichkeit*" (Metaphor, 36), Modell illustrates how the human brain is capable of categorizing, assorting and refreshing the given data depending on its perceptive process and the mechanisms thereof, all of which are thought to be termed *Nachträglichkeit* after Freud: "[t]he sorting of similarity and difference is another way of describing category formation. Categorization is a function of memory, and memory, in turn, is a property of neural systems" (Metaphor, 36). Although this reading bears the mark of re-transcription or recontextualization, it tends to diverge from the purely unassimilated sense of the traumatic event. The emphasis of Modell, to be precise, falls on the categorizing ability of the brain as well as memory in shaping the concept of belatedness.

Barely can any trauma rhetoric underpin the concept of the belatedness as resonantly and thoroughly as that of Laplanche and Pontalis. They expound on the staples of the concept of belatedness as follows:

> a. It is not lived experience in general that undergoes a deferred revision but, specifically, whatever it has been impossible in the first instance to incorporate fully into a meaningful context. The traumatic event is the epitome of such unassimilated experience.
> b. Deferred revision is occasioned by events and situations, or by an organic maturation, which allow the subject to gain access to a new level of meaning and to rework his earlier experiences.
> c. Human sexuality, with the peculiar unevenness of its temporal development, provides an eminently suitable field for the phenomenon of deferred action. (112)

That Laplanche and Pontalise's outline embodies some of the most integral components of the logic of belatedness─ terms such as unassimilated, revision, and impossible─ is truly thought-provoking. Thus, the traumatic and the unassimilated moment recontextualizes itself through the act of deference in the hopes of affording its victim the opportunity to revisit, revision, or instantiate anew the missed meaning.

Albeit favored by many trauma thinkers, the concept of belatedness galvanized intensely heated controversies as well. It was only a matter of time before some critics leveled their criticism─ mainly of negating nature─ against the belatedness model, particularly associated with Caruth. Barry Stampfl, in order to accentuate the weight of this opposition, makes an ironic use of the phrase "laundry list of complaints" (134). Some of the staples of such critical views with respect to Stampfl are:

> Our dominant paradigm of trauma takes for granted the cultural presuppositions of the western hegemony, ignoring alternative premises and practices; (therefore) it focuses exclusively on the plight of the individual at the expense of social collectivities ; it assumes a singular catastrophic event as the cause of traumatization, ignoring everyday insidious abuse; it overestimates linguistic or

> psychic damage while minimizing the material aspects of trauma; and it erases the distinction between victim and perpetrator. (134)

Disregarding the socio-cultural schemes and overemphasizing the linguistic and psychic facets of the traumatic event, to name but a few, are among the salient points shaping the complaining voice of the opposing camp. Ruth Ley's critical voice, Stampfl suggests, takes the center stage of the opponents' complaints, for Ley believes Caruth misread the Freudian concept of *Nachträglichkeit*: "Caruth's (mis)reading of Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit* transforms what Freud had conceived of as a delayed recoding of a repressed memory from early childhood into 'an ineluctable process of infection' spreading uncontrollably from witness to witness" (qtd. in Stampfl 135). This particular misreading of Freud, in the light of Ley's logic, clouds the very principle by which Freud coined the whole concept of belatedness insofar as Freud never meant the belatedness to resemble an infection which spread from a witness to another.

How do the narratives of our corpus fare in the midst of all the arguments incorporated into the concept of "belatedness"? The narratives of McCarthy's oeuvre, particularly the narratives chosen for this project, offer abundantly in this realm. For instance, in the particular case of *No Country for Old Men*, the capsule and its uncanny state of killing people shocks both the characters and the audience so bitterly as to require further time to digest or take in the overwhelming nature of the shock, hence the belatedness of the trauma.

A Beacon of Hope: Balaev and Belau

Perhaps the name Balaev is as awe-inspiring as the life it has breathed into the challenges flung upon the mainstream trauma notions. The Freudian camp of Caruth needs to be relocated and renegotiated once Balaev's opposing aesthetics occupy the stage. Indeed, this must be the utter reason why she includes a chapter titled "Literary Trauma Theory Reconsidered" at the very outset of the book she edited. In her seminal essay "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory", she subtly undermines the long-standing position of trauma via introducing a series of trends whose final impetus finds its force in the very annihilation of the primary models. With a retrospective approach she states, "[a] central claim of contemporary literary trauma theory asserts that trauma creates a speechless fright that divides or destroys identity" (Trends, 1).

Of analogous note here, I additionally suggest, should be the model developed by Abraham and Torok. In their *The Shell and The Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis* (1994), they make several allusions to the term "splitting" in the ego as to finally title it "internal psychic splitting" (100), explicating it as: "two distinct 'people' live side by side, one behaving as if s/he were part of the world and the other as if s/he had no contact with it whatsoever" (100). Put briefly, trauma cuts the person (ego) in half, thereby creating two selves out of one. Similarly, Bloom states "trauma produces a disconnection syndrome, a functional 'split-brain' preparation in which the two hemispheres appear to function separately and autonomously" (76).

Apart from the debate of disassociation, Balaev is consequently quick to adduce more facts to reveal the salient features of the abreactive model[14] of trauma, favored by trauma writers such as Kali Tal[15], to pave the way for her own resonantly opposing voice later. Some of the key terms to characterize the nature of the Caruthian abreactive model, mentions Balaev, are "unrepresentable, unspeakable, timeless, repetitious, contagious and infectious". From the position of Caruth and the abreactive thinkers, trauma shatters, dislocates, dissociates and eventually leaves the victim haunted, unable to grow back to his/her initial state. This shattering could encompass many psychological disorders such as PTSD, amnesia and multiple personality disorder. The identity of the victim could never be rebuilt in the light of the abreactive model. Yet, the novel notions of trauma, Balav claims, are suggestive of a more fluid dynamism:

> In contrast to the abreactive model of the self as a fixed entity that then fragments, the trauma novel demonstrates that the reorganized self is relational and emerges relative to a specific place that produces a specific articulation of a transformed identity. This expression of the self is socially contingent and connected to a place of inhabitation and meaning, not binarily dependent on a linear re-enactment of a traumatic experience. The protagonist's subjectivity is, thus, depicted as a fluid process located in relation to new realities or new knowledge. ("Trends", 9)

[14] The abreactive model is the mainstream trauma model emphasizing the role of trauma by its recreation through the narrative memory of experience. This is the same Freudian Caruthian camp placing the stress on the impossibility of trauma's representation or conception, hence the dissolution of the self and the temporal gap.

[15] Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* has constantly been acclaimed for its unified account of individual/collective traumas on a biographical scale including the most traumatizing milestones of humanity such as the Holocaust and Vietnam War. Pitting the individual war traumas against the sexual violence targeted at women, Kali Tal creates a decent account of trauma aesthetics, culture and narratives.

Then, the trauma victim's identity does not necessarily shatter or disassociate, and even against what the odds are, the victim's identity could display more fluidity to new realities. Put differently, the victim might be said to be reborn. The above-mentioned account of trauma as "repetitions, infectious and contagious" is primarily indebted to Caruth's notion in her *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, that one's trauma is never his/her own (24). This particular notion lays the groundwork for yet another compelling trauma model normally called the "trans-historical/inter-generational" trauma, as described by Balaev:

> The theory indicates that a massive trauma experienced by a group in the historical past can be experienced by an individual living centuries later who shares a similar attribute of the historical group, such as sharing the same race, religion, nationality, or gender due to the timeless, repetitious, and infectious characteristics of traumatic experience and memory. Conversely, individual trauma can be passed to others of the same ethnic, racial, or gender group who did not experience the actual event, but because they share social or biologic similarities, the traumatic experience of the individual and group become one. This leads to the claim that trauma narratives can recreate and abreact the experience for those who were not there--the reader, listener, or witness can experience the historical experience firsthand. (3)

The above-mentioned depiction of trauma, however, is subject to many critical complaints, among which one could mention the duality of "absence/loss". The theory fails to draw a marked line between the personal loss and the historical absence; the very vexing pitfall against which LaCapra, as this study brought to limelight earlier, advised any trauma researcher. The above-mentioned model conflates these two terms irreversibly, which is further noted by Balaev:

> The theory of intergenerational trauma conflates loss and absence and collapses boundaries between the individual and group, thereby suggesting that a person's contemporary identity can be 'vicariously traumatized' by reading about a historical narrative or due to a shared genealogy that affords the ability to

> righteously claim the social label of 'victim' as part of personal or public identity. (3)

Balaev mentions the work of Bouson as the most apposite example for the concept of intergenerational trauma. Bouson's work is even further solidified once it leans towards the concept of violence: "Bouson offers useful insights on Morrison's writing practices, but maintains an essentialist rhetoric regarding trauma and (racial) identity in an effort to link the current violence and despair of a racial/cultural group in America with the violence and oppression experienced by the same historical racial/cultural group decades ago" (3).

All these notions of transhistorical trauma later meet their repudiating points: "the transhistorical model tends to produce a reductive view of the variety of responses to trauma and the processes of memory and identity formation found in literary representations" (3). This way, the transhistorical model is repudiated on many fronts. Despite such repudiations, many critics still cling to the model, as "some critics are quick to employ the transhistorical trauma theory as a means to explain the intersections between personal and social experience" (4). Balaev, to add to the point, turns to the cultural and local nuances of the genre of the novel by which the deeds of the protagonist could be corrobrated, hence a more individual perspective than social:

> To claim that the traumatized protagonist expresses a specific, idiosyncratic response to trauma, while also functioning as representative figure of a social group in order to relate the actions in the novel to a historical event, does not suggest that the protagonist asserts an essentialist, intergenerational identity based on a decades-old event. The novel demonstrates the ways that an experience disrupts the individual conceptualizations of self and connections to family and community, but the values attributed to the traumatic experience are largely shaped by cultural forces created within the world of the novel. (5)

It is not solely the trans-historical nature of trauma that is undermined by the diverse cultural social forces that attack the protagonist, but the famed unspeakable and incomprehensible Caruthian model is to be reconsidered here in the light of the same social mores which allow for a colossal sum of relativity in judgement: "[t]his perspective reminds us that the 'unspeakability' of trauma

claimed by so many literary critics today can be understood less as an epistemological conundrum or neurobiological fact, but more as an outcome of cultural values and ideologies" (5).

Balaev's stance in *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* evinces no significant divergence from that of her seminal essay, save for some more pluralistic approach details, which address the same conflict in terms of trauma being able to be articulated and expressed whereas the classic approach left no room for this expression or representation:

> In contrast, the pluralistic trauma model that allows determinate value and social specificity, even when a survivor like me had little agency in the moment of violence, thus acknowledges the variability of trauma in its definition and representations, and may emphasize the active potential for meaning in the moment of harm. (6)

Thus, with the pluralistic approach towards trauma comes the notion of trauma having the potential to be expressed, represented and spoken, while the classic approach contended otherwise and believed trauma was unspeakable, silent and haunting.

Another staple of the pluralistic approach put forth by Balaev is the capability of trauma in locating its meaning. Unlike the classic trauma scholars who believed language can never express the nuances of trauma, the contemporary trauma thoughts lean towards a divergent path, as Balaev explicated the matter: "[c]ontemporary pluralistic approaches in literary trauma theory are more likely to acknowledge both the neurobiological and social contexts of the experience, response, and narratives, as well as the possibilities that language can convey the variable meanings of trauma" (7). The same deconstructive pluralistic notion holds true in the realm of locatability of trauma, something classic trauma scholars would deem unfeasible, which is illuminated further in the words of Balaev: "[i]f the larger social, political, and economic practices that influence violence are the background contexts or threads in the fabric of a traumatic experience in the first place, then trauma's meaning is locatable rather than permanently lost" (8).

Balaev's novel voice and her compelling opposition to the classical conventions of trauma and the trans-historical discourse of Caruth merit sufficient heed in negotiating the thematics and delicacies of the narratives chosen for this study insofar as some portions of the trauma-oriented discourse of our corpus casts aspersions on the conventional trauma trends. The substantiation or

decline of themes such as representation, locatability, comprehensibility and inter-generational nature of trauma are all among the arguments which will constitute the pillars of the body of chapter two of this study.

Another opposing insight posing a threat to the orthodox Caruthian streams of thought is the voice of Linda Belau. Looking askance at any tenet or thought which renders the trauma experience so extraordinary as to deserve the phrases such as "ambassadors of an exceptional realm, bearers of a higher (albeit more terrible) knowledge" (par. 1), Belau purports that trauma falls into a representable and accessible domain: "traumatic experience is not in fact inaccessible in the way or to the degree that its major theorists have asserted. Because traumatic experience--and experience in general--is tied to a system of representation, to language, it is necessary to come to an understanding of the role that the signifier plays in trauma" (par. 2). Taking her cue from the logic of the symbolic as well as the impossibility of the traumatic event, she believes one has to venture into a province far beyond the symbolic to come to terms with the intensity of the traumatic suffering:

> Because traumatic experience is grounded in the repetition of an impossibility, it is indelibly tied to the real beyond the signifier. In this sense, trauma opens up an ethical space beyond the symbolic which is, nevertheless, intimately tied to the materiality of the signifier and, therefore, to our social and linguistic destiny. This ethic of the impossible, however, drives the subject beyond the social to an encounter with the inadequacy of the signifier as she moves beyond the particular event of her suffering to a failed encounter with the very possibility of knowing that suffering completely. The psychoanalytic intervention assures us, then, that we are responsible in the face of something that exceeds symbolic guarantee. This is the ethical dimension of trauma that gets left behind when we attempt to place traumatic experience beyond language and representation, beyond the traumatic materiality that is the signifier. (par. 2)

Thus, the materiality of the signifier in a traumatic narrative is eclipsed, if not eliminated, by the impossibility of the experience or the original encounter, hence a left-behind ethical condition and the complexity of the victim's ethical/psychic mode. Later, in an effort to further unravel this

conundrum, Belau frequently exploits the term "refusal of understanding" to represent something so unspeakable and unconceivable as to consequently arrive at what is termed as "the obscenity of understanding".[16] Deploying the renowned documentary of Shoah, she is at pains to expound on how Lanzmann's Shoah is less concerned with the mission of unraveling the semantic layers of the film than transmitting the incomprehensibility of the traumas, which did not but paralyze all the holocaust survivors whom he personally interviewed. Lanzmann hopes to bring out the truth of witnessing through an impossible transmission of the incomprehensibility of the Shoah.

Thus, for Lanzmann, the act of bearing witness does not necessarily lend itself to the production of meaning. For Lanzmann, it seems, bearing witness takes place only in and as this form of transmission (Belau par. 26). Thus, to Belau, this inability to perceive the gravity of the Holocaust atrocities is precisely the ethical pitfall of trauma and its impossibility of repetition, hence the recourse to, as the least compensation possible, the transmission of what can be transmitted, namely the effort to give life to a nine hour documentary that can at least convey the meaning, if not produce the meaning. Interestingly enough, this conscientiously crucial but impossible transmission is elegantly showcased in the words of Derrida when he states the "'impossibility and necessity' of bearing witness to the 'unexperienced experience'" (qtd. in Wolfreys 133). Striking the same chord and in an effort to be further privy to Belau's novel insight, Ramadanovic deploys the concept homogenously in his "Introduction: Trauma and Crisis". Embroiling in the initial portrayal of trauma solely as an instance of human experience and thus representable, he goes on to shed light on the inherent fault of the signifier:

> The signifier is marked by a constitutive inadequacy, a missing piece, and not, as some have supposed, a prohibited content. This is to say that since loss is a part of the subject's constitution, the signifier, or a symbolic act, cannot fill in the lack produced by a trauma or restitute the loss. The consequence of this inadequacy is that the subject is destined to encounter trauma in the present, where trauma appears

[16] "Obscenity of Understanding" should be best characterized in the words of Lanzmann as he is to be originally credited with the term:

> There is an absolute obscenity in the very project of understanding. Not to understand was my iron law during all the eleven years of the production of Shoah. I clung to this refusal of understanding as the only possible ethical and at the same time the only possible operative attitude. This blindness was for me the vital condition of creation. Blindness has to be understood here as the purest mode of looking, of the gaze, the only way not to turn away from a reality which is literally blinding (Lanzmann 204).

> as a repetition. What is repeated here is the impossibility of returning to the past moment when the injury occurred. (par. 17)

Then, the failure of the signifier is compensated through recourse to recurrent returns─ of rather impossible nature─ to the moment of trauma. In view of this failed attempt, trauma, Ramadanoivc asserts in light of Belau's insight, is not to be classified as incomprehensible but in dire need of being transmitted as "a repetition of what is not possible" (par. 17). Thus, as the return trajectory to the past or original encounter is barricaded, the only thing that could sugarcoat the pain is but the repetition of the impossible moment in the present, hence the Caruthian jargon of haunting, which seems to be an over-exaggeration from the vantage point of Belau and her phenomenology. Thus, through a more logically scientific engagement with trauma and attributing the fault to the signifier rather than any other mysteriously metaphysic entity, Belau's thought streams depart from the so-called unparalleled sublimities of the trauma and prefer to explore it in the light of more tangibly and linguistically felt aesthetics.

Childhood Trauma

As a thread of my arguments in the pages to come is to entail the notions of childhood trauma, which are high on the critical agenda in addressing our corpus narratives, the research in hand must now veer in this direction. If trauma befalls its victim at the very outset of his/her growth, many complexities will arise, which might be beyond one's ken. Susan L. Reviere, more in the guise of a clinician than a literary critic, happens to untangle the intricate knots of the concept of childhood trauma once mysteriously tied in medical jargon.

However, her findings can be applied in the realm of literature and the selected narratives of this study. She postulates: "[i]f trauma is encountered during childhood at a time when schemas and beliefs about the self and world are forming, traumatic experience may interface with development of subordinate, general schemas that create a sense of continuity in self, memory and meaning" (37). Reviere is quickly attentive to the chronic nature of trauma at the same stage hypothesizing that the slightest blemish to the psyche of the child could leave its debilitating mark on the schema of the child forever, "particularly in an environment of chronic trauma, the

predictability and stability of experience necessary for the formation of adaptive schemas may be absent, disrupting schema formation at all levels" (37).

Then, at stake here are the nascent "schemas" of the child which will be teetering on the brink of annihilation in the event of early unset trauma. I take the liberty of shedding some quick light on the concept of "schema" now. With respect to Bruhn, schemas are "expectations, rules, or axioms derived from past experience that the individual maintains about himself, others, and the world" (qtd. in Reviere 28). In other words, one cannot expect the survivor of a childhood trauma to possess a solid self-image, nor is /shehe able to develop a world-view or a comprehensive cognition of his/her surrounding world. Furthermore, Reviere posits that the so-called survivor may sustain further damage as the trauma "may affect adversely the ability of the child to make future assimilations and accommodations and thus may reduce cognitive and behavioral flexibility, impairing the child's ability for adaptation" (37). Equally important here is what the child lacks in terms of the real phenomena that could occur to or around him/her, i .e. a "disruption in the ability to interpret reality in terms of existing schemas, failing to build on a personal narrative and to develop a capacity for flexible adaptive action" (37). To recap, the traumatized child will be devoid of the advantages of self-awareness, adaptation, schemas and flexibility.

Through similar angles, since a child does not possess the ability of complete verbal representation, which originates from "the child's immature capabilities for language, thought and affect modulation" (38), then to him/her as a chronic trauma survivor "traces of the traumatic experiences may survive only as loose constellations of unintegrated, fragmented percepts" (38). Under such circumstances, one may wonder whether or not the memory will be lasting with the survivor. What has been divulged is that "not only the child may have a limited ability to make sense of trauma for incorporation into organized memory; the early experience, even if encoded into some form of early schematic memory, is possibly unintelligible to the adult whose schemas have equilibrated over time" (38). What seems to be germane to the present line of discussions─ particularly the grave impact of trauma on the victim in terms of cognition and schemas─ could be the notions of Ramadavonic in addressing the "narcissism of trauma" in his essay "'YOU YOUR BEST THING, SETHE': TRAUMA'S NARCISSISM".

He, analogous with Reviere, purports that "trauma effects a withdrawal from the world and that the traumatized subject seems, at least in one of the early phases of trauma, focused on him–

or herself and closed off from anything that can be construed as different, threatening, or alien" (178). Enlarging on the self-centeredness of the trauma and the Freudian thoughts thereof, he argued that the trauma victims were inclined to opt for a type of "turning inward" (179) and foster a sense of apathy towards others. One, warns Ramadavonic, should not be fooled when he/she observes the altruism among the trauma victims:

> The altruism of trauma survivors and their dedication to helping others do not disprove this line of reasoning since trauma victims tend to help others only once they are well into working through their trauma. Those they help also tend to be like themselves, such as victims of the same kind of trauma or members of the same national, racial, or gender group. Even selflessness and solidarity among survivors can hence be tied to a narcissistic compulsive repetition and a kind of acting out. (19)

Thus, the trauma victims' altruism and compassion, if existent at all, only accounts for their own "narcissistic goal of self-preservation" (179), insofar as the victim feels his/her peers are content with the procurement of their share of altruism. Put briefly, far from helping others, they only care to help their own kind, hence serving the purpose of feeding their own narcissism.

Perhaps what our study entails at this juncture should be more in line with the thoughts and perspectives of a psychoanalyst named Leonard Shengold whose extensive studies over literary material coupled with psychiatric findings have afforded him a unique status in both fields. In his aptly-denominated book *Soul Murder*, he sets out to interrogate the perpetration of brutal or ruthless acts against children that culminate in their emotional bondage, if not subjugation, to the abuser and finally, in their psychic and spiritual annihilation.

Curiously novel in his approach towards literature and psychology, he strives for a new literary-psychoanalytic realm within which he tries his hand at examining the lives of canonical writers─ specifically their childhood─ such as Dickens, Orwell, Chekhov and Kipling. Shengold has abundantly and diversely defined the concept of "Soul Murder" throughout his book with respect to each writer's autobiographical narratives (particularly Dickens), stylistics, and preferred motifs. Here are some thought- provoking descriptions regarding the concept of "Soul Murder" outlined in the introduction of the book:

> Soul murder is neither a diagnosis nor a condition. It is a dramatic term for circumstances that eventuate in crime─ the deliberate attempt to eradicate or compromise the separate identity of another person. (2)
>
> Murdering someone's soul means depriving the victim of the ability to feel joy and love, as a separate person. (2)
>
> Child abuse is the abuse of power…. Soul murder is as old as human history, as old as the abuse of the helpless by the powerful in any group…. But soul murder has a particular resonance with the twentieth century with the world of Orwell's 1984- and a particular relevance to it. (3-4)
>
> Soul murder is my designation for a certain category of traumatic experience: instances of repetitive and chronic overstimulation, alternating with emotional deprivations that are brought about by another individual. (16-17)
>
> The term [Soul Murder] does not define a clinical entity; it applies more to pathogenic circumstances than to specific accounts. (17)
>
> Ibsen and Strindberg wrote mainly about the destruction of the souls within the arena of the family….the capacity to destroy a soul hinges entirely on having another human being in one's power, and this confrontation of the powerful and the helplessly dependent is inherent in childhood. (19)
>
> In soul murder the victim's identity including the sexual identity, is lost. (20)

Having perused the above-cited quotations, one can possess a vivid overview of what "Soul Murder", be it in bodily or spiritual terms, could encapsulate. Then, "Soul Murder" is indeed indicative of a severe trauma imposed on a child's psyche whose effects might echo in arenas and dimensions such as the identity, joy, deprivation, family, and the perpetration of crime. With this in mind, one is right to wonder what repercussions might befall the so-called survivor whose soul has been subject to such forces. It comes as no surprise to witness dramatic changes in such a person, and unlike the clichés, this survivor might not even survive the physical aftermath of the event as Shengold asserts: "the children may not physically survive the assaults or they may later

succumb to an inner need for annihilation analogous to that Rene Spitz[17] (1954) found in his study of emotionally deprived infants who died after growing up in institutions" (6). The survivors of such abuse, thus, sustain a self-destructive path, which eventually creates in them a strong, conscience-distorting need for punishment.

What soul murder can make out of a survivor has always been a heated debate. The vestigial gifts, be they a matter of vice or virtue in the victims, are greatly variable: "some abused children may sustain more abuse and transcend it better than others" (6), while some other "soul-murdered (sadomasochistic) children can become psychotic, or psychopathic and criminal. Or, by using massive or primitive defenses, they may be able to contain the terrifying, primarily murderous charge of affect they have been forced to bear" (6). Last but not least, "some survivors appear to have derived from their experiences adaptive powers and talents that helped them survive" (7). Thus, the subject of adaptation in the victims of childhood trauma proves to be a profound nexus of controversies, as Reviere entirely repudiated the sustenance of "adaptive powers" in such victims.

Given the fact that the leading character of one of our corpus narratives— *The Road*— is a child, all the above-mentioned accounts will be of overarching significance once our study leans towards exploring his psyche. The notions of adaptation and schema might be integral to the analysis of the above-mentioned traumatized child's behavior throughout the narrative.

Biological Traces

Having elucidated the salient features of childhood trauma, I wish, at this germane point, to allow this study to target the features of trauma victims, irrespective of the time in which trauma occurs. In this respect, Bloom's words seem to be the most apposite choice. One conspicuous sign of a trauma victim is "the speech terror", which makes the victim fall short of his/her linguistic functioning under stressful circumstances, as Bloom avers: "[t]his loss of language function is frequently profound and extremely important. The traumatic experience and all associations to it cannot be incorporated into a cognitive framework, cannot be ordered, partly because the brain system that accomplishes this task is shut down under the impact of extreme stress" (75-76).

[17] René Árpád Spitz was an Austrian-American psychoanalyst known for his contribution to Ego Psychology and his organized research in the realm of infantile deaths on account of malnutrition.

Stammering, one can obviously infer, should be a pertinent case of "terror". Upon this realization, one could rightly tease out the truth lurking behind the stammering of countless shell-shocked war veterans. As for the representation ways and types of the trauma victim, Bloom posits:

> The victim experiences and remembers the trauma in nonverbal, visual, auditory, kinesthetic, visceral, and feeling ways, but is not able to 'think' about it or process the experience in any way. Since cognitive processes are dependent on language function, without words we cannot 'think'… [trauma victim] cannot control the intrusive images, feelings, sensations. They come into consciousness unbidden, terrifyingly vivid, producing a vicious cycle of helpless self-revictimization. (76)

Apart from the linguistic occlusion, another feature which stands out in trauma victims is the anti-social behavior, as Bloom asserts: "[a]s a result, intrusive sensory experiences and negative feelings predominate and behavior becomes increasingly separated from the social meaning system. The person disconnects from other people as they actively avoid listening or participating in a dialogue with the victim" (77). Hence, as victims are deprived of the skill of speaking, they only turn to the only language left before them: acting. The anti-social behavior aside, trauma victims express themselves through very idiosyncratic or odd behavior:

> As a result, the victims begin to signal their distress in the only way left open to them, through the repetitive, often ritualized, seemingly bizarre signal, symbolic and emotionally charged behavior of the nondominant hemisphere. One man tries to jump off a building, another woman repeatedly runs razor blades across her breasts, another buys an assault weapon and sprays bullets across a crowded street. (78)

Violence, with the analytical stance of Bloom in mind, should be one of these idiosyncratic behaviors in trauma victims. Then, the trauma victims' peculiar or violent behavior, be it toward themselves or others, cannot be justified through the typical behavioral landmarks. The novels and films of the present study─ particularly *No Country for Old Men*─ are replete with characters who exhibit a myriad of such behaviors. They would rather act than talk. Their violent behavior is

relentless, not to mention the idiosyncratic type─ the gas capsule and its traumatizing effect─ this violence has harbored in itself.

Craps: Ethics of Trauma

Perhaps another newly emerging voice in the recent trauma theory should be Stef Craps'. With his essay titled "Wor(l)ds of Grief: Traumatic Memory and Literary Witnessing Cross-Cultural Perspective", he negotiated the dialectics of trauma through an interesting dialogue between the conventional trauma notion buttressed by Caruth and her followers and TRC. Initiating his essay with some introductory debates on trauma and touting Caruth as one of the founding mothers of this province, he is quick in criticizing her, Hartman, Felman and LaCapra for being oblivious of the cross-cultural implications:

> It is something of a surprise, therefore, to note that the founding texts of the field─ including, besides Caruth's own work, writings by Shoshana Felman, Geoffrey Hartman, and Dominick LaCapra, among others─ largely fail to live up to this promise of cross-cultural ethical engagement. They tend to ignore traumatic experiences and histories of currently subordinate groups both inside and outside Western society, and/or to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity. (53)

Craps then unravels the body of TRC elucidating both the upsides and downsides. Cathartic opening of the wounds of the past was an upside for which TRC was praised; "[w]e open wounds only in order to cleanse them, to deal with the past effectively and so to close the door on that dark and horrendous past forever" (56). In contrast, some claimed that all the testimonies were heard ineffectually and to no avail: "They [Trauma Centre facilitators] just want us to be victims and tell our stories so they can help us. I am sick of telling my story. It makes them feel good to show that they are helping us, that things are really OK. They don't really want to change things and what good does telling our stories over and over and over do?" (TRC qtd. in Craps 5).

Departing from the TRC staples, Craps approaches his most pivotal objective attempting to negotiate the problem of trauma via Magona's *Mother to Mother* as a literary response to the efforts of TRC. The novel *Mother to Mother* centers on the fictionalized assassination account of Amy Biehl, the famed Fulbright American activist on Apartheid, who had come to South Africa to pave the way towards the country's first democratic elections. Four black youths beat and stab a renowned writer to death. The violence to which they resort in assassinating the leading character Biehl was outrageous. The four testified before the amnesty committee and all four were granted amnesty. Magona's story, however, moves far beyond the surface. Magona sets out to shape a delicate dialogue between Amy's mother and the killer's mother Mandisa: "While expressing her grief over Amy's death, Mandisa also asks for understanding for her son from, Mrs Biehl but by extension also from the reader: 'you have to understand my son'. Mandisa's narrative is a moving attempt to reach out and share grief, offer comfort, and foster mutual understanding across racial, ethnic, and cultural boundaries" (60).

Apart from a sense of empathy or sympathy, the novel essays to interrogate the hatred and the violence built up in the souls of the perpetrators via the apartheid atrocities of the era, which were portrayed as natural by the killer's mother and as nothing that left her agitated or surprised. This was purely what the perpetrator's mother Mandisa wanted Amy's mother to understand, and consequently forgive her son: "Apart from uncovering hidden histories of violence and oppression, *Mother to Mother* also critically reflects on the possibilities for healing and reconciliation in the wake of the traumas of colonialism and apartheid" (62). Craps' words, exploiting Magona's novel, might indicate not only the direct dialectics between the two mothers but also the cry for help on the side of the victimized in order not to seek revenge. New beams of hope could be expected to shine at the horizon if this were achieved. This, then, is but a novel trauma outlook:

> It does so, however, not in a spirit of fatalism or despair, but in the stubborn belief that there is hope in crossing boundaries to witness the pain of others. In trying to find words of grief to bridge worlds of grief, Magona's novel maintains faith in the idea that trauma provides the very link between cultures, and that working towards a fuller appreciation of the nature, extent, and ramifications of the pain of others can, indeed, help efforts to alleviate it. (63)

Craps, this study implies, urges us to put the Caruthian rigidities behind us and instead seek out the ways by which the dialectics of pain and suffrage between or among cultures could not only be explored but also alleviated, hence new horizons towards forgiveness and redemption. This new outlook, however, resembles a "long road that remains to be travelled" (63).

The Traumatic Uncanny: Repetition, Death, and Alienation

Discourse of trauma is readily and outlandishly allied to the concept of "the uncanny". No sooner does trauma haunt its narrative than "the uncanny" alienates its readers' minds and souls. Both trauma and "the uncanny" haunt their narratives in an unprecedented fashion, hence the reason for the close alliance between the two. An intertextuality of an odd type, I must imply, presides over the bridge shaping the aesthetics of both concepts. This bridge infallibly keeps providing new insight to the nuances of both realms. Borrowing the terminology of Hegel, one could dare say trauma feeds the consciousness of "the uncanny" and vice versa, hence the crystallization of the dialectics between the two. It is no wonder when Royle, as a seminal "uncanny" theorist, shapes the very outset of his book: "[t]he present study is haunted, from before the beginning, by innumerable other texts" (3).

It must sound fair to deem "the uncanny" a monstrous─ purposely monstrous for the sake of a due wording for "the uncannny"─ gate initially erected to allow literature to fly beyond its expectedly sweet mission and arrive at a fertile zone by which one might begin to have a faintly intelligible notion of what fear, in a spine-chilling sense, can be all about. To lay the concept bare to the naked eye, this is, to a certain degree, a reasonable occasion to have the words of Freud in his landmark essay "The Uncanny" (1919) at the behest of this study, the very person to whom this realm rightfully belongs: "The subject of the "uncanny" is a province of this kind. It is undoubtedly related to what is frightening─ to what arouses dread and horror; equally certainly, too, the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so it tends to coincide with what excites fear in general" (1964, 219). Distancing from the general layer of fear, the uncanny fear is dark and phantom-like. In his book *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (1995), Terry Castle, fully indebted to Freud, contends, "[t]he Freudian uncanny is itself a sort of phantom, looming up out of darkness: an archaic fantasy or fear, long ago exiled to the unconscious, that nonetheless 'returns to view'— intrudes on ordinary

life— but in a form so distorted and disguised by repression that we fail to recognize its psychological source" (7). Thus, "the uncanny" strikes dark fear into the hearts of its audience or readers without having a certain palpable source or a registered origin.

Is "the uncanny" only a matter of horror and terror? Seeming to be too puny a question at first sight, it, yet deep inside, serves as the most quintessential instrument for discerning a clear direction to the present study. If the response to the question were affirmative, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* would have been the token of "the uncanny", whereas it is not. To Freud, for an artwork to merit the title of "the uncanny", a myriad of elements have to prevail, including repetition, animism, silence, death, fear of being buried alive, odd coincidences, double, telepathy, alienation, dismemberment, double, and castration. These elements, in conjunction with some other elements this study cannot be thorough enough to adumbrate, pave the way towards a clear image of "the uncanny".

Repetition is an indispensible component of a traumatic narrative which has lent itself to acclaim and celebration not only in the eyes of Caruthian trauma thinkers but also within the frameworks of recent trauma theorists. Needless to say, repetition is also one of the pillars of the concept of "the uncanny". This interface is an arena on which Anne Whitehead writes a great deal:

> One of the key literary strategies in trauma fiction is the device of repetition, which can act at the levels of language, imagery or plot. Repetition mimics the effects of trauma, for it suggests the insistent return of the event and the disruption of narrative chronology or progression. Many writers, including Barker, Morrison and Sebald, repeat key descriptions or episodes from one novel to another, and this technique both suggests an underlying trauma and implicitly critiques the notion of narrative as therapeutic or cathartic. Freud's work on the uncanny reveals that even apparently innocuous daily objects and incidents can be drawn into an atmosphere of trauma. (86)

Thus, through a rupture in the narrative or recurrent descriptive modes, repetition renders the already traumatized text doubly traumatizing. In addition, the therapeutic effect is effaced, which adds even further to the traumatizing weight of the narrative. This repetition, Whitehead notes, renders even the simplest things uncanny in the light of the power of" "the uncanny". The dual

nature of this repetition, Whitehead notes, oscillates between two the poles of a continuum, the former being "acting-out" or melancholia and the latter being "working-through" or mourning:

> Repetition is inherently ambivalent, suspended between trauma and catharsis. In its negative aspect, repetition replays the past as if it was fully present and remains caught within trauma's paralyzing influence. It corresponds to LaCapra's notion of 'acting-out' and Freud's conception of melancholia, pathological responses to loss which seek to incorporate the other into the self as an act of preservation. Repetition can also work towards memory and catharsis, however. In this aspect it relates to LaCapra's concept of 'working- through' and Freud's notion of mourning. It represents the discharging of emotion cathected to loss and the subsequent reformulation of the past. LaCapra draws on the concept of 'working-through' to describe the role of literary texts in representing trauma, arguing that writing necessarily implies some distance from trauma and is an inherently curative process. (86-87)

Thus, repetition either gives vent to the emotions (in the direction of catharsis, "working-through" or mourning), or it bottles them up (in the direction of melancholia and "acting-out"). However, the uncanny version of this repetition is bereft of individual will or control, as "[t]he uncanny is a source of dread because it acts as a mode of involuntary repetition and forces upon us the idea of something fateful and inescapable" (128). In addition, the uncanny duality, similar to the duality of traumatic repetition, vacillates between the "spatial paralysis" and "temporal amnesia": "Arising from the transformation of something homely into something decidedly not so, the uncanny arouses in us the dual responses of spatial fear leading to paralysis of movement, and temporal fear leading to historical amnesia" (128). Thus, the uncanny instills in us the sense of stalling the movement and time, a type of repetitive paralysis which renders the traumatic repetition even creepier and more unmentionable.

Prior to embarking upon my argument apropos the uncanny death drive, I deem it necessary to shed some quick light on the concept of "catharsis" as it is integral to our explorations of trauma and "the uncanny". In order not to lead my study astray, I will try to be as pithy as possible. Deriving its original nature from literary criticism and Aristotelian philosophy, catharsis seems to

have secured its status, if not stature, in almost every art and discipline. Yet, what genuinely unravels its aesthetics, I would like to argue, is the notion of violence, particularly on screen insofar as "its relevance for the topic of screen violence is undisputed" (Grønstad 32).

The advocates of catharsis aver that the sentiments of the viewer, while viewing the films, go through countless ups and downs. The gravity of some scenes, particularly indebted to their violent nature, finally urges the viewer to discharge his/her feeling of fear and pity. This very moment is when catharsis occurs:

> Those who subscribe to a theory of catharsis hold that the experience of watching fictional violence can be emotionally and morally beneficial, since it contributes to a purging of destructive impulses in the viewer. This is in some ways an instrumental theory of simulated violence, one in which the experience of spectacle provides an aesthetic means to a moral end. Fictional violence acts as a safety valve which mollifies whatever violent impulses the viewer may possess. (32)

Central to the Aristotelian catharsis would be the components of pity and fear: "emotions of pity (eleos) and fear (phobos) … are so central to the substantiation of the catharsis effect", as Grønstad further comments (33). Repentance or regret is thought to be another indication of a cathartic phase. In fact, repentance serves the process of the cathartic purging as a catalyzing agent. In short, fear, pity, and regret shape a chain of feelings which strip the viewer or the reader, viewing or reading a rather violent work, of his/her destructive senses, hence a purified and transcended state in his psyche.

Catharsis has succeeded in drawing to itself both detractors and proponents. To name but a few, names such as McKinney and Dukore stand out, as "[f]or Doug McKinney…catharsis is a means by which to approach the violence, and more recently Bernard Dukore has undertaken an Aristotelian reading of the function of the carnage in The Wild Bunch" (33). Allied to these names is yet another compelling voice such as Sobchack's voice resonating, "[o]ur films are trying to make us feel secure about violence and death as much as it is possible; they are allowing us to purge our fear, to find safety in what appears to be knowledge of the unknown. To know violence is to be temporarily safe from the fear of it" (qtd. in Grønstad 33).

Oddly enough, catharsis has unwittingly brought upon itself a heavy body of opposition as well. Against catharsis stands a very assertive argument put forward by Prince. He has recurrently dismissed the notion of catharsis, and the pertinence thereof, as a fallacy; "[t]he amplification of viewer shock, horror, nausea … achieved through such tools of cinema as montage editing, loud music, or gory prosthetic effects, is unrelated to the emotions and reactions Aristotle described. … To use his notion of catharsis in connection with cinema violence, as Peckinpah did, is a misapplication of the term" (111). Prince incessantly refutes the non-cathartic nature of violence once it veers in the realm of explicit violence (110). This denotes the fact that graphic violence only invites aggression rather than fear and pity. Sturdier than the voice of Prince in undermining the legendary awe of catharsis is the voice of McCauley. He employs three grounds upon which the whole concept of catharsis seems to collapse, in the full sense of the term:

> First, McCauley believes that a theory of purgation will not work if there is nothing to be purged to begin with. Second, he challenges the assumption that exposure to cathartic drama functions to decrease rather than augment aggressiveness in the viewers. Third, McCauley wonders why dramatized violence would actually lead to purgation in the first place. (Grønstad 34)

Whether the theory of catharsis is still binding or not, there are some certain facets of this theory which render it hard to discredit. Catharsis is unequivocally targeted at the existence of some certain emotions, irrespective of the way they are addressed, which yet proves the existence of their consequent pale, if not failed, purging. This view comes to light further as Grønstad mentions: "[h]ence, the theory of catharsis presupposes the existence of a specifiable set of active emotions─ particularly pity, fear, and anger─ in the audience. Furthermore, the theory assumes that these emotions need an outlet through simulation if they are not to become potentially disruptive" (35). Thus, violence, via a fashion of simulation, of rather cinematic nature here, touches upon such sentiments and allows the spectators to re-experience their feelings of fear and pity, hence a simulated cathartic discharge.

With this discharge comes another very efficacious aspect of catharsis which is the medical or the therapeutic dimension. Once the repressed feelings of the viewer come to the surface, a sense of redemption or emancipation is not far to be reached. The viewer, to be exact, feels

liberated: "Catharsis as purgation accentuates its therapeutic aspect; the sequential dynamic of the experience is one where the emotions of the viewer develop from tension to release (crisis), to a calm pleasure" (36). In line with catharsis, violence manages to also improve the narrative via complicating the plotline: "the violence may be found to enhance the structure of the narrative through its amplification of the crisis" (36). The therapeutic facet of catharsis and violence, not in matters of coincidence, aptly converge into the same therapeutic "talking cure" of which Hustvedt, Hartman, and Modell spoke and into which this study delved previously. The same way violence releases the therapeutic sense of catharsis which eventually remedies trauma, talking cures the trauma. Thus, one could dare infer, catharsis, too, is deemed a way of talking or "working through"; one that releases the repressed tensions previously built up by traumas. This must be why the cathartic notion and its therapeutic efficacy[18] have constantly struck a close chord with the concept of "working through" and the modes thereof, such as testimony and survival in the direction of which this thesis previously veered.

The corpus narratives in this project─ specifically *No Country for Old Men*─ are profoundly embedded in the concept of violence which seems to be working in tandem with the force of catharsis. Characters are likely to discharge their traumatic burdens through violence which grants them the gift of catharsis. This angle will prove instrumental in interrogating the psyche of the characters and the narrative mode thereof in chapter two.

Death, another muse for the aesthetics of "the uncanny", is replete with tantalizing ambiguities. Bewildered by its essence, it suffices to know "[s]omething comes back because in

[18] The therapeutic efficacy of catharsis has been a heated controversy in the last decades. "The theory of catharsis implies that there is a therapeutic dimension to art"(36). Arnheim insists on the altruistic and pain-abating dimension of the art saying, "[b]y demonstrating what it can do for the distressed, art reminds us what it is meant to do for everybody" (qtd. in Grønstad 36). Against the notion of "art as therapy" stands a profound line of complaints whose quintessential essence derives from the fact that the viewers and characters possess a myriad of feelings among which pity and fear might not have a clear place: "The viewer's experience of film fiction and art in general is considerably more complex than the theory of catharsis allows for. Audiences come to the movies equipped with a range of different emotions, among which pity and fear might not even be included" (37). In addition to the monolithic nature of the concept of catharsis, which is the result of violence here, it has been suggested that violence might not be able to cleanse the repressed emotions at all: "it has by no means been established that violent artworks actually cleanse the viewer's negative emotions, and it is even possible, in theory, that at least for some viewers, these emotions may actually be reinforced by fictional violence" (37). Then, not only does violence not cleanse the psychic repression but it also augments the already concealed fictive violence inside the psyche of each and every individual. This, with an analytical stance, is but a total collapse of the cathartic "art-as-therapy" logic. Thus, this therapeutic dimension is far beyond the demands or the reach of catharsis: "The concept of "art-as-therapy" suggests a broader reach than the theory of catharsis, but only on a flagrantly speculative level does it explain the creation of, and immersion in, violent fictions" (37).

some sense it was never properly there in the first place" (Royle 95). It is both traumatic and uncanny. Death, I propose with no intention of overstating the argument, traumatizes "the uncanny" by means of adding to its already deeply bizarre and frightening state. Put differently, death or the death drive renders "the uncanny" doubly traumatic. As I delineated the inner workings of the uncanny notion of repetition in my previous arguments, one could readily infer that death strikes a very close chord with repetition, insofar as both converge to the same realm of "the uncanny": "It is the notion of constant recurrence or compulsive repetition that leads Freud to his theory of death drive (95)". The same is verified in the words of Whitehead asserting, "[t]he uncanny reminds us of our own internal and unconscious compulsion to repeat which is represented by the death drive" (128).

The repetitive nature of death has yet set in motion another thought-provoking stream of logic in the aesthetics of "the uncanny", namely its surreal nature. Shaping an analogy between death and surrealism, Royle contends, "[t]here is a shade of surreal about the death drive and a shade of the death drive about surrealism" (97). The impetus behind this analogy emanates from the omnipresent nature of death which entirely resembles the aesthetics of surrealism, as the author adds: "[w]e might try to elucidate the death drive's capacity to be everywhere and nowhere in terms of what is called surrealism" (97). Lastly, Surrealism, Royle argues, is not active anymore, yet it has miraculously embroiled all the arts in its aesthetics. The same could be said about death inasmuch as it haunts us all without even being there.

Death drive presides over us all. Its ubiquity, Royle is not alone in asserting so, is out of the question. Barely can one escape it or want to escape it indeed. It is more of an urge to die. Adverting to T.S. Eliot's *Wasteland* and its epigraph taken from the first century writer Petronius, he sheds light on how the character Sibyl cannot yearn for anything better than death: "Sibyl, What do u want?", "I want to die" (qtd. in Royle, 98). Royle, on his quest for literary examples of the death drive, does not fail to turn to Yeats' famous poem saying, "[w]hat disturbs our blood/is but its longing for the tomb" (qtd. in Royle 98). Lawrence's most famous apocalyptic phrase "fight to the death" or "pleasure in self-annihilation", "maddening suicidal drift of Woolf", and many other literary instances whose mention falls beyond the extent and scope of this study, are the ways by which Royle is unraveling the workings of the death drive striving to prove the fact that death is what all of us yearn for.

Mentioning Lawrence as a compelling example of the death drive writer, Royle goes so far as to mention how his work is intertwined with the elements of the death drive: "Lawrence's work is shot through with all the characterizations of the death drive that we have bullet-pointed here: the uncanny links with silence, woman, compulsive repetition, the demonic and diabolical, ghostly ubiquity and placelessness, solitude and singularity, writing and storytelling" (99). Thus, what adds to the gravity of the death drive in uncanny fiction is how it is affiliated with some other particular elements which bring about more macabre fear and suspense.

Death and repetition are omnipotently felt in the narratives of our corpus. In other words, the narratives of our corpus are emblematic of death, its drive and its uncanny repetition. Not only do they haunt the narratives but they also shape a myriad of other thematic and semantic dialectics without which the stories would not have come to being. Perhaps the massacre at the outset of *No Country for Old Men* and the apocalyptic death of the whole humanity in *The Road* serve as striking instances of the uncanny death in our selection.

Perhaps nothing dramatizes the uncanny feeling more than the alienation which "the uncanny" instills in one. If the defining element of "the uncanny" is the transformation of something familiar to unfamiliar and vice versa, one, without further ado, should think of alienation as the most pivotal constituent in this process. The awe of alienation humbles us once it "makes the familiar strange, it challenges our beliefs and assumptions about the world and about the nature of reality" (Bennet and Royle 37). On an artistic note, and through the lens of the famed playwright Brecht, "the alienating or defamiliarizing power of drama─ and art and literature more generally─ lies in the capacity to transform us and the world around us" (37).

Derived from traumas of war and the complex brutalities thereof and "as a significant psychoanalytic and aesthetic response to the trauma of war" (Whitehead 133), the concept lent itself to the art of Surrealists, who, with their unrivalled innovation, utilized "the uncanny" "as an instrument of defamiliarization" (133). Thus, defamiliarization was the most pragmatic tool at Surrealists' disposal to portray the aesthetics of "the uncanny". Therefore, thinking of "the uncanny" as something that "has to do with making things uncertain: it has to do with the sense that things are not as they have come to appear through habit and familiarity, that they may challenge all rationality and logic" (Bennet and Royle 37) and bearing the afore-mentioned descriptions of the alienation in mind, it is not nor should it be imprudent to conceive that alienation serves as the most indispensable contributor to the formulation of "the uncanny".

Integral to trauma fiction as well as dystopian narratives, alienation has been subject to increasing attention in the recent years. As a mode, most dystopian works shock their readership through the very strange spatial settings as well as eccentric timelines they develop within their fictional worlds. This literary technique or device has been approached and appreciated under different titles such as defamiliarization by Russian formalists, alienation or distancing effect by Brecht, and eventually "cognitive estrangement" by Darko Suvin. All three terms serve the same purpose, as Booker depicts:

> The principal technique of dystopian fiction is defamiliarization: by focusing their critiques of society on spatially or temporally distant settings, dystopian fictions provide fresh perspectives on problematic social and political practices that might otherwise be taken for granted or considered natural and inevitable. This exploration of alternative perspectives obviously recalls the technique of defamiliarization that the Russian Formalists saw as the literary technique … it even more directly recalls the alienation effect of Bertolt Brecht…One recalls, for example, Dark Suvin's useful emphasis on 'cognitive estrangement' as the central strategy of science fiction. (19)

Thus, dystopian fiction, by virtue of peculiar temporality and unprecedented spatiality, alienates the characters as well as the reading minds. In short, dystopian literature opens the readers' eyes to such unprecedented and newly witnessed atmospheres as to give rise to an ineffable and peculiar sentiment called alienation, which questions the sense of reality and the state the person is in. This has served as an end not only in dystopian works, but also in contemporary trauma fiction. Thus, characters, who are exposed to a new temporality and spatiality, become alienated as well as alienating; the latter being the effect they impose on the audience and readers. Given the traumatic nature and the dystopian essence of the selected corpus of the present study─ traumatic applied to both novels and dystopian particularly attributed to *The Road*─ the uncanny alienation will provide a new insight in exploring the inner workings and unraveling the mysteries of the two narratives.

Epilogue: A Constructive Future Outlook

How will trauma discourse fare in the midst of all the previously shaped theories? Will trauma fiction, once more, revolve around tangibly violent and uncannily haunting occurrences such as war, death and matters of the same nature? Prefacing the book *Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*, Michael Rothberg seems to have a propensity for approaching this question through distinctly different aesthetics. Commencing the preface with a trauma genealogy, he is rightly quick in inviting all the scholars in the field to lean towards new dynamics and novel theoretical engagement other than Holocaust and Euro-centric events: "But even those who remain focused on Europe and North America argue for the need to rethink the central categories of trauma studies. History, after all, moves on, even if we stay in place" (xii).

Departing from the classic psychoanalytical paradigms of trauma studies and veering in the direction of more abstract, culturally diverse, and bio-political direction, Rothberg allows traumatic events such as global labor and climate change to pervade his arguments. Terming it "slow violence" and juxtaposing it against the classic extreme violence, he purports, "[t]he slow violence of climate change does not only require a shift in temporal perception away from the shattering event of classically conceived trauma; it also requires a recalibrated understanding of humanist history and subjectivity that displaces (without entirely eliminating) the positions of victim and perpetrator" (xvi). Rothberg, to lay emphasis on the novel future of trauma once more, urges us all to understand "how different forms of suffering and violence may inhabit the same social spaces and we need to understand what such overlap entails for the possibilities of resistance, healing, and social change" (xvii).

Human errors know no end. Sides will be taken, wars will be fought and blood will be shed. Victims and perpetrators will emerge. If public hanging of an adulterer does not instill fear in humanity, Coronavirus will. Yet, how shall we fare in the face of all the traumatic events? One, this study hopefully suggests, needs to find novel ways of channelizing all such atrocities into constructive pathways of healing, betterment and social dynamism. Trauma notions will be reconsidered and re-constructed if we think outside the box, hence further responsible sentiments. In order to attain this, one has to opt for an ethical approach. Finding a safe haven, in which trauma and ethics exchange their dialectics, has always been a humanitarian dream. Nonetheless, this is precisely what Onega and Ganteau aim at in *Contemporary Trauma Narratives: Liminality and*

Ethics of Form. Leaning towards an ethical stance and following Levinas's footsteps[19], they address the concept of the "alterity based on the non-violent relation to the Other" (12) and urge one to be attentive and responsive:

> Through their attentiveness to the singularity of the traumatic event, they get the readers to open themselves to the violence of experience, to train their attentiveness and responsiveness, and to favour risk-taking over noninvolvement. In this respect, the liminal, vulnerable form of trauma narratives iconically performs an ethics of alterity that is also an ethics of vulnerability. (14)

Urging us to lean towards the ethics of Levinas, Onega and Ganteau insist on practical modes of involvement, care, and responsibility on the side of the readers or the listeners. Thus, the future of the trauma fiction, this study aspires, might take the ethical trajectory striving to seek not only the novel socio-political and conscientious horizons but also the ideals Levinas once longed for. In *No Country for Old Men*, despite the densely traumatizing air of the narrative, one can still single out some deeply wounded yet moral characters as well as Levinasion encounters, which instill hope and passion in the minds of not only characters but also the audience. Thus, the ethical outlook of trauma, this study will also suggest in chapter two, plays a significant role in coming to terms with the traumatic experience and its aftermath.

[19] For a thorough understanding of Levinas and his ethics, refer to his Totality and Infinity (194-201). Yet, for a brief account of Levinasion ethics here, I prefer to refer to Wolfreys's chapter titled "Ethical Criticism". The concept of alterity, according to Wolfreys, is the site of responsibility. Alterity works completely in tandem with the moral duties and obligations humans tend to display for each other. "The notion of alterity itself … refers to our inherent responsibilities and obligations to the irreducible face of the other... This similarity of identity and human empathy establishes the foundation for our alterity… in short, the possibility of being 'altered', and for the responsibilities and obligations that we afford to other beings" (Wolfreys 115). Then, the Levinasian alterity, in short, is the very scope of the human capabilities in expressing their sympathetic behavior towards each other even at first sight.

Chapter two – *No Country for Old Men*: From the Good Old Days to the Phenomenal Traumas of the Contemporary West

> "What do you say to a man that by his own admission has no soul? Why would you say anything? I've thought about it a good deal. But he wasnt nothin compared to what was comin down the pike."
>
> – McCarthy, *No Country for Old Men*

The Haunting Spectral Trauma: Chigurh

Barely can one feel untroubled upon sleeping into a nightmare like Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem) in *No Country for Old Men*. Once one reads him in the words of McCarthy or views him through the visualized images of the Coen Brothers, the nightmarish haunting will never cease to exist. The character harbors some of the most seminal archetypes of malice, brutality, and darkness, in the full sense of the term. He, held by this study, is an unprecedented trauma per se; a character whose traumatizing behavior informs not only the traumatic weight of the narrative and the characters thereof, but also that of the readers' and viewers' response equally. The unsettling and unnerving impact Chigurh has on the characters and the audience alike, strips one of an iota of hope one could have towards an ethically elevating civilization in future. The gruesome hanging scene I portrayed at the outset of my previous chapter might be eclipsed in rigor and profundity, once one witnesses this traumatic phenomenon resonating through the narrative.

This chapter sets out to explore the traumas, either in the guise of characters or traumatic events, of the narrative of *No Country for Old Men*. This exploration and its arguments will take their cue from the theoretical framework which was developed in the first chapter. It is only through the meticulous dialogue between the two, whose relational mode of analysis this chapter aspires to achieve, that a thorough investigation of the nature of trauma in the narrative will come to life. Furthermore, this chapter will lean towards the Coen brothers' adaptation of this novel in order to observe their visual aesthetics and their selected portrayals of trauma in the film.

In order to initiate my arguments efficiently, it is imperative that I refer to the peculiar mode of killing which Chigurh, the antagonist of the narrative, opts for. A gas running bolt pistol or a stunner is what Chigurh uses to murder his victims, punching a straight hole into the forehead of each and every victim he gets his hands on. Gilmore's simile in describing Chigurh is not far-fetched: "Anton Chigurh is like a walking abattoir. People are just cattle to him, which makes his

weapon of choice especially appropriate" (64). What adds to the gravity of this traumatizing behavior is how he allows a tossing coin and the ensuing side thereof to conduct the decision-making process. Old or young, helping or unhelping, police or civilian, they all stop breathing at the hands of a psychopath who has made a habit of shedding blood. Codes, be they moral or legal, mean no more than his impoverished sense of mercy, humanity and logic. The duly employed words of McFarland in describing Chigurh, it seems to me, suit this occasion most aptly:

> Chigurh does seem to be some alien menace who operates outside categories of human understanding, certainly ethical categories. And although he bleeds and his bones can be broken, he exudes a certain physical invulnerability. He is almost robotic in his single-minded focus on completing his agenda. There is also something perversely alien in his choice of weaponry: a device for slaughtering cattle that resembles a portable oxygen tank. (171)

Thus, the robotically brutal nature of Chigurh is utterly consonant with his uncanny choice of weaponry; a cattle gun which is as lifeless or alienating as, if not more than, Chigurh himself. One might look askance at the efficiency of this device in times when speed takes precedence over brutality. Yet, the crux of the matter is one should not think of efficiency as a priority here. The motive behind this choice lies somewhere between philosophy and insanity. Chigurh, with all his traumatizing insanity, makes the best of his efforts to sanely make a point, which is evidently exhibited in the words of Ellis (Barry Corbin):

> By killing people with a cattle gun, Chigurh is turning them into livestock, denying their humanity. Moreover, by shooting them in the forehead with it, Chigurh simultaneously deprives them of their living sight while imprinting in them a symbolic third eye—a visual representation of the enlightenment on matters of chance and destiny that he sometimes provides in a brief pre-murder Socratic dialogue. (137)

That an insane character like Chigurh makes a point so bold as to be decoded only by the intelligentsia of a society is but a paradox in the full sense of the term; a paradox whose nature rests only on liminal perceptions, as Estes states "he is both above (by abilities) and below (by

depravity) everyone else in the text. Chigurh is both of, and not of, *country*. Chigurh's liminal status is expressed through his weapon of choice, which mixes the categories of animal and human" (184). This paradoxical liminality in Chigurh's character (human and non-human) and his uncanny device, I suggest, give rise to a particularly traumatizing and spectral air all throughout the narrative which haunt not only the characters but also the reading and viewing minds. Put differently, Chigurh and his cattle gun are like the ghost of trauma whose staples I dissected in chapter one. Together, they hunt as well as haunt their victims leaving their mark (the carved forehead) "without the victim's discernment" (Wolfreys 133). Chigurh, in all his liminality, insanity and inhumanity, is the phenomenal ghostly trauma of the narrative, in that he haunts his victims by virtue of his spectral stealth the same way the ghost of trauma never ceases to chase its victims. He is like an apparition which sneaks up on his victims no less than the way a traumatic event quietly casts its dooming shadow on the psyche of the trauma victim.

Bearing the greatest relevance for the current thread of arguments is the term "phantomatic or phantasmatic" employed by Wolfreys in an effort to accentuate the spectral nature of the trauma. Wolfreys refers to Althusser maintaining, "something occurs . . . but nothing happens . . . everything is immobile" (qtd. in Wolfreys 134). In *No Country for Old Men*, both film and novel, Chigurh, proves to be a specter par excellence to the best of his abilities. Resembling an unrelenting trauma, he haunts while being as silent as he can. Let us treasure McCarthy's precious words in this respect:

> I dont know nothin. I wish I did. Or I think I wish it.
> Yeah.
> He's pretty much a ghost.
> Is he pretty much or is he one?
> No, he's out there. I wish he wasn't. But he is. (152)

This particularly eerie or macabre nature of trauma, termed phantasm by Wolfreys and best manifest in the haunting behavior of Chigurh, is duly noted in the words of Eric Hage who wrote a literary companion on McCarthy stating, "[h]owever, to all but Bell and those whom he has killed Chigurh remains a phantasm; even to Bell, who knows that he exists, he is a cipher"(123). This overwhelmingly spectral weight of traumatization, which comes at the hands of Chigurh and his

cattle gun, and the analogy I drew between Chigurh and the concept of trauma are best manifest and heaviest on the shoulders of Sherriff Bell (Tommy Lee Jones) who finds himself unable to cope with the phenomenal terror this combination instills in his heart.

As Estes states, "In the end, Sheriff Bell retires because he cannot handle the rarified form of evil that is embodied in Anton Chigurh" (183). He deems himself no match for the new evil against whom he is meant to stand, thereby uttering: "when you encounter certain things in the world, the evidence for certain things, you realize that you have come upon somethin that you may very well not be equal to and I think that this is one of them things" (152). Equally significantly, Bell does not intend to tarnish the integrity of his soul, which cajoles him into saying "[a]nd I think a man would have to put his soul at hazard. And I won't do that. I think now that maybe I never would" (McCarthy 5), hence his abject retirement.

As Chigurh's inexorably spectral chase after Llewelyn Moss (Josh Brolin) takes the central stage of all the haunting aesthetics of trauma both in the novel and the film, the breath-taking encounter between the two and the traumatic shootings thereof should be the staple of all the haunting scenes McCarthy ever composed. Perhaps the following excerpt would serve my purpose the best:

> He stood at the door listening again. He dragged out the nylon bag from where he'd pushed it under the bed and set it in the chair in the corner. He went over and switched on the light at the bedside table and stood there trying to think…Then he went over and stood at the door, his thumb on the hammer of the shotgun. He dropped to his stomach and put his ear to the space under the door…Heart pumping against the dusty carpet. He waited. Two columns of dark intersected the bar of light beneath the door …The next thing he heard was the key in the lock. Very softly. Then the door opened. He could see out into the hallway… There was no one there. He waited. He tried not even to blink but he did…The man was no more than ten feet away. The whole room was pulsing slowly. There was an odd smell in the air. Like some foreign cologne. A medicinal edge to it. Everything humming. Moss held the shotgun at his waist with the hammer cocked. There was nothing that could happen that would have surprised him. He felt as if he weighed nothing. He felt as if he were floating. The man didnt even look at him. He seemed oddly untroubled. As if this were all part of his day…By the time he'd crossed the street Chigurh was already on the balcony of the hotel above him. Moss felt something tug at the bag on his shoulder. The pistolshot was just a muffled pop, flat and small in the dark quiet of the town. He turned in time to see the muzzleflash of the second

> shot faint but visible under the pink glow of the fifteen foot high neon hotel sign. He didnt feel anything. The bullet snapped at his shirt and blood started running down his upper arm and he was already at a dead run. With the next shot he felt a stinging pain in his side. He fell down and got up again leaving Chigurh's shotgun lying in the street. Damn, he said. What a shot. (57-59)

The lexical aesthetics as well as the syntactical innovation ("Heart pumping against the dusty carpet, He tried not even to blink but he did, He felt as if he were floating, He didnt feel anything. The bullet snapped at his shirt and blood started running down his upper arm, With the next shot he felt a stinging pain in his side") which McCarthy employs to portray this ghostly traumatic encounter instills in any reader the terror, awe and the spectrality of Chigurh. To add to the gravity of this haunting encounter, McCarthy never allows one to hear a word out of Chigurh, which renders the scene doubly uncanny and ghostly. In McCarthy's words, "[t]he man didn't answer. He could have been a mute for all that Moss knew" (59). What he lacks in verbal skills─ which adds to his uncanny ghostliness─ he makes up for with extraordinary chase and shooting skills, hence Moss's confessional line[20] after falling down upon Chigurh's shot: "What a shot" (59).

Another spectral strand within the haunting discourse of trauma in *No Country for Old Men* is readily detected in the never happening encounter between Sherriff Bell and Chigurh. Exhausting himself irreversibly, Bell constantly falls short of competence and agility in chasing Chigurh. Although they never meet, their telepathic ghostly encounters instill even more terror in

[20] This confessional line, I hypothesize, must arise from Moss's fatal flaw in missing his shot at the outset of the novel while hunting an antelope. The same fatal flaw, or hamartia in literary terms, repeats itself in this haunting encounter, yet differently. While he could have killed Chigurh upon his entrance to the room, he preferred to do otherwise and let him live, only to have Chigurh shoot back at him some moments later and wound him severely. A decent interpretation of Moss's fatal flaw in hunting the antelope, which could be what the whole narrative hinges upon implicitly, is what I intend to encompass at this juncture: "The protagonist of a classic Greek tragedy must be essentially a good person, a person whose intentions are good but who does not really or fully know himself or herself, and this lack of self-knowledge is mixed with a bit of hubris, which puts off one's aim. This is quite literally suggested of Llewelyn at the beginning of the movie when he is hunting for antelope and ends up shooting one in the hindquarters. In a sense, the entire movie is prefigured in this scene. It is a scene that shows Llewelyn to be highly competent, an expert at hunting: the way he uses his boot for a barrel rest, the way he adjusts the sight for the distance of the shot, his patience in taking the shot, his picking up his shell after he takes the shot are all signs of his expertise. All are signs of his knowledge, his ability, his power, but the scene also shows his ultimate hubris, literally and figuratively. Instead of killing the antelope, he only wounds it, the worst possible outcome for a responsible hunter" (Gilmore 62). The hamartia, I should add to Gilmore's words, repeats itself in the guise of mercy or any sentiment echoing the same, hence sparing Chigurh's life. Had he followed the same robotic brutality Chigurh exercised all throughout the narrative, he might have survived.

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one's heart than the actual encounter, as illustrated by Campbell: "[i]n what follows, Bell repeats the exact movements of Chigurh, sitting down on the sofa to drink milk, looking at his reflection in the TV screen. The two men never meet in the film but are cleverly associated in this uncanny moment as haunted and haunting presences of the West, as well as mirror images of each other" (335). Bell's copying every single move Chigurh made without having met him does but add matchlessly to the gravity of the ghostly haunting which trauma discourse— originating from Chigurh's character in this narrative— could offer.

The Haunted Genre and the Brothers' Intrigue

The ghostly nature of Chigurh as the very root of traumatization in this narrative takes its toll not only on the characters and the audience, but also on the generic nuances of the novel and the film. Put differently, the genre and the aesthetics thereof are likewise haunted in *No Country for Old Men*, hence the resultant generic ambivalence. In the words of Campbell, "[t]he Western genre, therefore, like the ghostly figure of Chigurh, is present and absent throughout the film, hovering like a specter in the very material of the movie itself but always differently" (335). The genre is lost, unspecified and vague, in much the same way Chigurh is a man of "the present or the future, of unspecified race, language, and name" (337). In short, the genre is as spectrally traumatizing as Chigurh is.

Pivotal to luring the Coen brothers into visualizing this narrative should be this very generic ambivalence. Being enamored with deterritorializing or manipulating generic values and fixities, the Coen brothers "epitomize genre as a principle of contamination, a law of impurity, a parasitical economy . . . a sort of *participation without belonging*" (the Coen brothers qtd. in Adams 332). Genres as diverse as film noir, western, thriller, crime and action were attributed to the film. This genre ambiguity, which had ostensibly galvanized the brothers' interest in the narrative, caused a certain body of oscillation in their own stance apropos the genre of the film. Consequently, "[p]ressed by interviewers to specify its genre, the brothers vacillated" (Adams 168). However, they eventually purported, "it's the closest we'll ever come to making an action film" (Coen brothers qtd in Adams 168). By the same token, Ryan P. Doom purports, "*No Country for Old*

Men remains a mash-up, combining neo-western, crime, road, horror, chase, and gangster movies" (150).

Having the propensity for extenuating the cogent generic boundaries in their filmography, the Coen brothers found McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* as the most apposite material to entertain their ambition. The narrative, in more ways than one, subverts the typical structure of a Western film. To dissect this subversion, two courses are open to our advance. The first path, through which we can approach the generic breach in *No Country for Old Men*, is through exploring the moments of showdown:

> In the typical western a final showdown is the dramatic climax in the struggle of good versus evil, where the good ultimately prevails. *No Country for Old Men* thwarts the genre's promise of a final showdown between Chigurh and Bell. In fact, they never meet face to face. The sheriff, always a step behind, fails to track down his man, whom he believes to be a 'ghost'. Even the showdown between Moss and Chigurh in Eagle Pass ends in a draw, both of them wounded…(Adams 169).

Showdown and the eccentricities thereof aside, one cannot help but notice the atypical attributes inherently felt in the character of Chigurh which subvert the expectations for a western villain. This peculiarity is addressed aptly in the words of Adams: "[t]he generic outlaw is driven by lust for money (a bank robber or bandit) and, lacking a moral code, will resort to violence and murder to get what he wants. Chigurh is not interested in money or material things. He uses violence as a tool for administering his twisted sense of justice" (169). Explicating some bizarre features inherent in Chigurh's character, Hage pinpoints the same subversion saying "All of these qualities make Chigurh a psychopath, and, moreover, a zealot who acts out of unwavering adherence to principle" (Hage 123).

That a psychotic killer abides by such odd principles[21] not only subverts the generic expectations for a western villain but also deepens the traumatic graves in which the souls of the readers/viewers could be buried. The haunting figure of Chigurh coupled with the odd generic eccentricities of the narrative, which again have to do with Chigurh's omnipotent traumatic role, should, to all intents and purposes, fuel the passion of the Coen Brothers in opting for the adaptation of this novel. One could venture to posit that Chigurh and his traumatizing peculiarities must have profoundly appealed to the Coen brothers, hence the deep kinship between McCarthy and the brothers in striving to render his character as spectral as possible.

The generic subversion, the unpredictability of the narrative, and an aberrant Chigurh should be high on the critical agenda for the brothers, as Levine clarifies: "[b]ecause the brothers like to begin with a genre and then subvert it for their own purposes, they are hard to pinpoint or describe — and their next move is always impossible to predict" (59). Campbell's account of the Coen brothers' intrigue of the novel is even more thorough:

> Indeed the Coens were attracted to McCarthy's book precisely because of its ambiguous affiliation to the Western genre, for as Joel Coen told *Variety* just before the film opened, 'The novel works a certain way, where you think the story's about one thing, and then [Cormac McCarthy] basically pulls the rug out and you're forced to think, Well, then what is it about?'. Perhaps the best answer to this question is offered in another comment he made on the film: '*No Country* is perverse. And we always like something perverse.' (333)

[21] Perhaps the most philosophical encounter of the novel and the film, which could denote the peculiar terrain in which Chigurh' principles tread, is when Chigurh , once more like a specter, catches Carson Wells (Woody Harrelson) in his hotel room. Asking Wells "If the rule you followed led you to this of what use was the rule?" (McCarthy 90), Anton not only reveals that he is not merely a psychopath, but he also incorporates both Aristotle and Camus in one single question, as noted by Gilmore: "This is the great human question, the great philosophical question. It is the question that is central to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics,* where he frames it in terms of the problem of how to live a life without regret. It is what lurks under Camus's claim that the only real philosophical question is the question of suicide. That is, is there a rule that we can follow and, in following it, be brought to a place where we can affirm our whole life? Are some rules better than others, and if so, which rules, or, what ultimate rule, is the best?" (64). Shooting most his victim in the face or on the forehead, Anton, once more in the most haunting and traumatizing fashion, implies a violent form of wisdom's third eye. However, in the particular case of Wells, which drives Chigurh to the most contemptuous terrain of his brutality, "[t]his horrific delivery of knowledge with death, however, is lost on Wells" (Ellis 107). All Wells gets is sudden random non-philosophical yet traumatizing shot insofar as Wells, I should argue, is not worthy of the wisdom shot.

Monologues, Testimony, and Incomprehensibility

Release from or response to the unrelentingly traumatizing saga of events in *No Country for Old Men* with a spectral phenomenon called Chigurh, at its very core, seems to be ineluctable. Testimonial criticism, as delineated in chapter one of the present project, is tasked with the aforementioned release, namely through the act of bearing witness, which, per se, consists of listening and speaking. No character is more conscientiously overwhelmed by the phenomenal traumatization of Chigurh and his eccentric vileness than sheriff Bell in this narrative. Bell's overwhelming desperation in the face of unspeakable traumas, I hold, can be expressed as well as released solely through the confessional monologues which appear at the very outset of each chapter in an italicized fashion. Put differently and briefly, Bell's monologues release or cure the traumas in much the same way as Chigurh's barbarity haunts and plagues the characters.

Sheriff Bell's voice is the abject voice of disillusionment not only with his own pursuit of bringing a phenomenal Chigurh to justice, but also with the bitter break of the country, its ideals and its dreams, hence the appellation *No Country for Old Men*[22]. This collapse or break is made manifest in the words of Estes purporting, "*No Country for Old Men* presents us with a world that is broken and much of the text is devoted to different characters' thoughts on why this is the case" (179). The contemplation on the roots of this crumbling of the country or the world, mostly appearing in the voice of Sherrif Bell, not only informs the novel's jeremiad tone but also sets in motion the apocalyptic mode of the novel, with which Booker concurs most emphatically. Exploring the films of the Coen brothers and in particular *No Country for Old Men*, Booker avers:

[22] The title of *No Country for Old Men* is indebted to the famed Irish Poet William Butler Yeats' poem "Sailing to Byzantium" in his poetry collection "The Tower", composed of four stanzas, first of which begins:

> That is no country for old men. The young
> In one another's arms, birds in the trees
> – Those dying generations – at their song,
> The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
> Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
> Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
> Caught in that sensual music all neglect
> Monuments of unageing intellect.

A clear dusting of the poem reveals a deep jeremiad whose main constituent is not but lament or nostalgia for how the youth lose sight of the golden wisdom of the old. This way, the old, Bell in the guise of McCarthy's voice resonating Yeats's remorseful poem, feel redundant and have to sail away to Byzantium, a prosperous city replete with Yeats' intellectual, social and artistic values. A haven in which the senescent do not feel depreciated, Byzantium hosts the precious artists and philosophers: "[i]t is Yeats's vision, and certainly Nietzsche's as well, that it is the artist/philosopher who is most needed to help restore the balance" (Gilmore 74). McCarthy, by the same token, imprints his agitated authorial voice in the character of Bell, lamenting how this country is no longer fit for the old like him and his likes, hence *No Country for Old Men*.

"[t]he film, like the novel, is set in 1980, which adds a certain irony to the fact that both versions of the story (though perhaps more the novel) are informed by an apocalyptic, end-of-the-world feel" (199).

McCarthy's beauteous west crumbles and the mythic country falls apart. Not boding well on the future of America, this vile change finds its matching embodiment in the portrayal of a psychopath called Chigurh, with whose brutality Bell is left speechless. Paradoxically and opposed to the term speechless, Bell has no choice but release the intolerable weight of this traumatization by virtue of uttering certain speeches or monologues, by means of which, he could alleviate not only the present traumas of Chigurh but also his past war memories, as Tatum reaffirms this by articulating, "[w]hat he bears witness to along the border in 1980 and his eventual decision to retire rather than pursue Chigurh resurrect memories of his World War II military service…" (91).

The unparalleled power of speaking is precisely that which testimonial criticism aims at by allowing the victim to bear witness to the very agonizing nature of the trauma with which the victim is meant to cope. At the risk of sounding repetitive, I prefer to return to Marder who asserted, "[b]ecause bearing witness entails speaking in the first person in order to attest to a truth that can only be validated through the very act of speaking itself, testimony places the speaker in a unique and difficult position" (4). Hence, Bell, in *No Country for Old Men*, exercises this path, whose efficacy is what I shall return to later, in order to deal with his blighted condition.

Testimonial monologues of Sheriff Bell are not only targeted at luring us towards the total defeat of Bell's conscience and morality, but they also lead us towards his sense of guilt, shame and fears inherent in his unconscious, as illustrated in the words of Ellis:

> In this sense, Bell's monologues serve as evidence that his conscious control of life has become overwhelmed by unconscious fears more than those myriad worries he cites in his earlier grumbling over the state of society. The narrative including his combat confession points to guilt over his behavior during combat. But that, too, proves to be another red herring (the circumstances of his position with the machine gun prove that his guilt over leaving that post is notably inflated). Bell's real fears lie deeper, and thus his monologues employ the comparatively dreamlike quality of italicized type to take us into those fears, in the darker space of the unconscious. (150).

A salient feature inherently felt in most of Bell's monologues centers on the incomprehensibility of the traumas imposed on him. The Caruthian incomprehensible or unspeakable nature of trauma, albeit dismissed by many trauma scholars, is integral to McCarthy's[23] monologues and the aesthetics thereof. Plainly put, the trauma victim would hardly be able to comprehend what has befallen him, nor would he/she be able to cope with its unspeakable weight. Apart from the phenomenal Chigurh, the narrative is rife with diverse traumas whose release, I argue, comes at the hands of confessional monologues of Sheriff Bell. A pithy litany of the aforementioned traumas could be found in the words of Lincoln:

> Page after page of quick-cuts from pursuers to pursued, a child murderer executed in the beginning, a troubled sheriff who's never seen nine county homicides in a week, wives back on the dirt-poor ranch or trailer park, motel clerks snuffed with the cattle bore, patrolmen blown away, taxi drivers and border-crossers giving rides and coats to wounded runaways with bloody wads of cash, pubescent girls snuffed, doped Mexican kids killed joy-riding an old Buick through an intersection, Anglo teens aiding the devil for a few bucks in his get-away, and finally Bell's ghostly dream of his father riding a horse past him with a fire-horn to carry civilization somewhere else, a nighthawk father-son vision portending another story. Not a pretty picture, not a romance, not for light-hearted readers. (147)

All this, one should own up, is too much to take. Barely can anyone come to terms of comprehension with such traumas, hence the monologues and laments. To all this traumatic saga

[23] Sheriff Bell's monologues are deeply privy to McCarthy's intellectual and ideological concerns, hence my liberty to employ the phrase McCarthy monologues. Sherriff Bell's jeremiad, in more ways than one and on many fronts, is not his but McCarthy's, inasmuch as McCarthy's lifetime authorial thematics as diverse as violence, nefarious nature of drugs, absurdity, individual and collective integrity, pessimism towards future civilization, ineptitude of the law, incompetence of the lawmen, morality, conservatism, fate, luck, existentialism, revenge, betrayal and retribution, are readily conveyed through these monologues. The themes are omnipresent in roughly all his canon including *Orchard Keeper* (1965), *Child of God* (1974), *Suttree* (1979), *Blood Meridian* (1985), *All the Pretty Horses* (1992), *The Crossing* (1994), *Cities of the Plain* (1998), and his later work *The Road* (2006). It is my preference to refer to Ellis's words in this respect: "the novel's apparent conservatism seemed so insistent that against all better judgment I began to suspect (as many reviewers have) that this indeed indicated the frightened political views of an author now twenty years older than Bell and yet speaking through him" (134).

comes the weight of war[24], which weighs even further on the psyche of Bell as is Lincoln quick in mentioning how the whole family suffered serious war losses: "[u]ncle Ellis fought in the First World War, and his brother Harold died in that war. The dead brother's son Ed Tom Bell fought in the Second World War, distinguished himself dubiously in battle, and came home to the Texas-Mexican border as sheriff" (146).

All this tangible traumatic diversity aside, there is yet a more philosophical or intellectual trauma at play which renders everything else comparatively minute and that is how the "[t]he bad man gets his way. The women in the way get killed. The man at the crossroads of good and evil reads the coin the wrong way and gets gunned away" (147). This wound of injustice coupled with Bell's sorry ruminations on how things have been aggravated beyond repair compared to his generation, leaves him no choice but to relieve himself of this agonizing pain through monologues. The inability to make sense of things through plain comparisons, or incomprehensibility in Caruthian terms, comes to light when Lincoln asserts, "teachers in the 1930s worried about chewing gum, teasing, cutting class, and talking back, sheriff Bell says, and these days they list rape, arson, drugs, murder, and suicide on their educational checklist. Evil is relentless and unending…" (147). Thus, the present traumatic weight, it seems to a traumatized Bell, cannot be compared to that of his generation; it is beyond his ken, thus utterly incomprehensible.

Bearing witness to phenomenally hideous traumas of a fallen country, Bell exiles himself to a solitude whose only constituents, as illustrated in chapter one, are listening (more of looking or bearing witness here) and speaking, the latter of which reveals itself through the bitter monologues. This, however, seems not to be consoling him and the Caruthian incomprehensibility

[24] The traumatic theme of war, or anti-war in better terms, pervades McCarthy's novel. Sheriff Bell and Moss were veterans of The Second World War and Vietnam War respectively, not to mention Carson and Chigurh whose previous history was marked likewise. Bell, apparently most traumatized by his war experience, is filled with remorse for his involvement in war:

> I wont talk about the war neither. I was supposed to be a war hero and I lost a whole squad of men. Got decorated for it. They died and I got a medal. I dont even need to know what you think about that. There aint a day I dont remember it. Some boys I know come back they went on to school up at Austin on the GI Bill, they had hard things to say about their people. Some of em did. Called em a bunch of rednecks and all such as that. Didn't like their politics. (McCarthy 99)

The war-censuring tone is felt even more stoutly in the words of Ellis as he blames "the government's irresponsibility for its people, and America's violent history" (Chen 266). Not being able to makes sense of the untimely death of his brother Harold, Ellis cannot but hold war accountable for all the atrocities befalling the nations and their youth. Framing his novel with the historical context of wars and the brutalities thereof, albeit marginally enforced throughout the novel, McCarthy harbors a pacifist position: "McCarthy not only explicitly reveals the catastrophic consequences the Vietnam War and other wars have brought to people involved via the Western crime story, but also implicitly denounces America's involvement in Iraq War, which reveals his pacifistic position" (266).

still lingers on. Overrun by transition and modernity, Bell is inclined to espouse the power of monologues, which, in the words of O'Sullivan, "are on the one hand bitter-sweet commentaries on a country in decline and, on the other, reactionary, often patronizing, objections to anything new in the world" (219). Sullivan, too, does not fail to attribute Bell's incomprehensible state or his lack of understanding to Chigurh's monstrosity:

> For someone like Bell, old and close to retirement, the cognitive dissonance that Chigurh's crimes have disseminated has led to pastoral-like reveries of better times when men were men and things had less of an inbuilt-obsolescence about them. This lack of understanding with what is happening in the social reality is sometimes starkly shown. (O'Sullivan 219)

On closer inspection, Chigurh's monstrosity is as detrimental to Bell's incomprehensible desperation as the whole concept of transition, change and new traumatic phenomena. As a Christian traditionalist who believes in certain moral codes, Bell is deeply tormented in the face of such newly blatant traumatic events, to which he responds in the light of monologues, as John T. Arthur further comments:

> Sheriff Bell's commentary (Bell's monologues are central in establishing him as a traditionally moral character, and can be employed to further demonstrate Chigurh's amorality by comparison) at the outset of each of McCarthy's chapters serves as a series of touchstones for the novel, an overt acknowledgement of the changes wrought by the passage of time, presented by one to whom the changes are occurring. Although the removal of Bell's addresses from the film is not complete, their absence diminishes somewhat the overt impact of McCarthy's message about the difficult and painful nature of transition. (52)

If one is to do justice to McCarthy's intellectual ruminations and attempt to select one single most traumatizing monologue which captures the Caruthian rhetoric of incomprehensibility as well as Felman's testimonial witnessing, no imagery can be as moving as the opening description of the novel and the film, where Sheriff Bell bears witness not only to the traumatic testimony of a

murderer who killed his girlfriend for no reason, but also doubly traumatizing gas chamber execution. His inability to understand (incomprehensibility) the gravity of this crime drives him nowhere but to the testimonial terrain of monologues; two threads of trauma discourse which evoke the Caruth and Felman respectively. The description begins:

> *I sent one boy to the gas chamber at Huntsville. One and only one. My arrest and my testimony. I went up there and visited with him two or three times. Three times. The last time was the day of his execution. I didnt have to go but I did. I sure didnt want to. He'd killed a fourteen year old girl and I can tell you right now I never did have no great desire to visit with him let alone go to his execution but I done it. The papers said it was a crime of passion and he told me there wasnt no passion to it. He'd been datin this girl, young as she was. He was nineteen. And he told me that he had been plannin to kill somebody for about as long as he could remember. Said that if they turned him out he'd do it again. Said he knew he was goin to hell. Told it to me out of his own mouth. I dont know what to make of that. I surely dont. I thought I'd never seen a person like that and it got me to wonderin if maybe he was some new kind. I watched them strap him into the seat and shut the door. He might of looked a bit nervous about it but that was about all. I really believe that he knew he was goin to be in hell in fifteen minutes. I believe that. And I've thought about that a lot. He was not hard to talk to. Called me Sheriff. But I didnt know what to say to him. What do you say to a man that by his own admission has no soul? Why would you say anything? I've thought about it a good deal. But he wasnt nothin compared to what was comin down the pike.* (5-6)

Perhaps the lines "*I dont know what to make of that. I surely dont. I thought I'd never seen a person like that and it got me to wonderin if maybe he was some new kind*" and "*Why would you say anything? I've thought about it a good deal. But he wasnt nothin compared to what was comin down the pike*" capture the soul of this incomprehensibility. In Flory's words referring to the same monologue, "Bell understands neither why nor how someone could knowingly choose to act so evilly. For him, such a decision is incomprehensible. From his traditionalist Christian perspective, to do so would be 'to put your soul at hazard'" (119). Then, this confessional and testimonial monologue is all Bell has. Put differently, by dint of such confessional monologues, Bell wrenches himself and his traumatized psyche free of trauma's chain or, at least, he thinks he does. This is precisely what testimonial criticism, as addressed in chapter one, attempts to achieve via the act of listening and speaking.

A clear dusting of all the monologues reveals yet certain other traumatic tales which paralyze Sheriff Bell's psyche, time and again, to the point of absolute incomprehensibility. Two of these traumatic tales are compelling. The first concerns a lady putting her baby in the trash compactor in the monologue of chapter two, to which the Bell's monologue responds: *"[h]ere the other day they was a woman put her baby in a trash compactor. Who would think of such a thing? My wife wont read the papers no more"* (24). The second pertains to a couple who locked old people, tortured them, killed them, buried them in the yard and later cashed their social security checks. Monologue goes:

> *Here last week they found this couple out in California they would rent out rooms to old people and then kill em and bury em in the yard and cash their social security checks. They'd torture em first, I dont know why. Maybe their television was broke. Now here's what the papers had to say about that. I quote from the papers. Said: Neighbors were alerted when a man run from the premises wearin only a dogcollar. You cant make up such a thing as that. I dare you to even try*. (65)

Bell's monologues, or McCarthy's authorial voice, is starkly overwhelmed yet ostensibly sympathetic. The lack of understanding divulges itself lucidly through the phrases "You cant make up such a thing as that. I dare you to even try".

McCarthy monologues could also be approached through the concept of talking cure, which is another strand of trauma thinking whose theoretical framework I established in chapter one. As monologues, in essence, are a variation of talking or dialogue, their significance, in this realm, is felt even further. Narrating a traumatic event through time and space, Hustvedt theorizes, helps the victim develop a sense of agency and consciousness, thereby coming to terms with the unbearable state of the trauma (par. 1). Hartman, Modell and Mallot converge with the mentioned angle invigorating Hustvedt's argument. Through their stance, the trauma victim rids himself/herself of the negativity through talking. However, the crux of the matter is whether or not talking (monologues within the context of *No country for Old Men*) helps the process of healing or the therapeutic path.

That Sherriff Bell, or McCarthy, attempts to converse with his audience via the testimonial monologues to move beyond the absurdities or the nostalgic fix in which he has found himself tangled is unequivocal, yet to what extent his monologues bear fruits is what I would like to look into in the following lines. A rewarding achievement of the testimony, form the position of

Hustvedt and testimonial proponents, is the sense of agency, control and the ability to move beyond the futility or the meaningless web the trauma has spun around the victim, hence the ultimate emancipation and cure. Seemingly these monologues, albeit compelling in nature and thought-provoking in their aesthetics, plunge the character even further down to the abyss of despair, nostalgia and defeat, hence another allusion to the conventional Caruthian trauma discourse vis-à-vis paralyzing incomprehensibility of trauma:

> Narratively speaking, one point of Ed Tom's confession is to reiterate his fear-tinged incomprehension of the "new" kinds of crime and evil he faces. But just as crucially he reveals that he cannot even honestly profess the faith that he elsewhere claims (such as in the opening sequence or in his conversation with the El Paso Sheriff). In becoming disillusioned with his old values, Bell feels confused and defeated. He has lost faith in what had formerly given meaning and value to his life. (Flory 126)

The sense of despair, loss of faith, nostalgic deadlocks, and futility, which result from the Caruthian discourse apropos incomprehensibility, is not what the rhetoric of talking cure expects to achieve. Not only do the monologues not redeem Bell of his traumatized state, but they also weigh further down on his psyche, causing him to move along the trajectory of defeatism, hence culminating in his eventual retirement. Ellis, Bell's uncle, solemnly dismisses Bell's defeatism: "[p]resented as a more thoughtful, authoritative peer who has forgiven the man who put him in a wheelchair and as a representative of the 'old-timers' Bell so reveres, Ellis dismisses Ed Tom's divine self-condemnation" (127). Losing sight of such thoughtful opposition, Bell still retreats to his defeat through his retirement.

The Coen Brothers' Monologues: From the Textual Aesthetics to the Visual Aesthetics

McCarthy's monologues echo with outright resonance in the Coen brothers' adaptation. As autonomous auteurs who had constantly written their own screenplays, they were exposed to their

first direct adaptation from a literary source (novel) via *No Country for Old Men*. Unlike the common critical thought anticipating their total subversion of the novelistic contents, which is in line with their passion and propensity for the subversion of the generic boundaries, the brothers kept true to the novel to the best of their abilities, that "satisfied most admirers of the literary source material" (Bergan 91). Prior to my arguments concerning how the Coen brothers dealt with the monologue aesthetics, as this study attempts to unravel the visual stylistics with which these monologues were treated, I would like to put forth the driving force which lured the Coen brothers towards the adaptation of this specific novel.

The shared aesthetics between McCarthy's textual world and the Coen brothers' visualization know no end. Over a span of three decades, the Coen brothers have made seventeen feature films whose genres, stylistics and contents beat, one after the other, the classic cinematic stereotypes. Not only has their canon bespoken the very alarming worries of cinema today, but it has also happened to be in direct dialectics with the same approaches that have evinced the image of entertainment, "as all they really want to do is have fun" (Levine IX). The very close dialogue between entertainment and violence in their canon, I would like to hold, is as scintillating as their oblivion of cinematic or literary conventions in architecting their idiosyncratic characters and heroes who do not fall to the circle of archetypal super-intellectuals. Instead, "[t]hey're bumbling fools always in over their heads, never able to comprehend or formulate plausible solutions. Coen characters emerge as anything but the quintessential hero. They are individuals who rarely represent a standard genre ideal" (Doom XIII). These Coenesque no heroes, and the films in which are meant to serve their purpose, have no morals whatsoever, at least that is what they think: "[n]one. None of them have messages. You see morals? Do we have morals?" (qtd. in Doom XIII). Last but not least, their villains, if they decide to architect one[25], "live by their own sense of ethics…operate by their own rules…only their values and beliefs matter because they are destroyers without conscience" (XIV).

Such idiosyncratic characters and subverted genres typically require and operate in particular settings which, albeit real on the outside, "do not quite correspond to places and times in the real world" (Booker 5), or in other words, "their version of the United States resides in a

[25] Examining the traits of the hero and anti-hero in *The Hudsucker Proxy* (1994), *The Big Lebowski* (1998) and *No Country for Old Men* (2007), S. Roberts, through his article titled "Homeric Heroes in Ethan and Joel Coen's The *Hudsucker Proxy* (1994), *The Big Lebowski* (1998) and *No Country for Old Men* (2007)", interrogates how the Coen brothers subvert the defining elements of hero and anti-hero concepts.

different reality" (5), hence Booker's term of "alternate reality" in addressing the Coen brothers' canon. What renders the alienating effect of their alternate reality quite tangible is how the two brothers "avoid sex scenes in all their films minus the first one [Blood Simple]" (Doom XIII). Furthermore, their amoral characters, aberrant genre aesthetics, and fictitious settings find their thematic haven in portraying a mythic version of America; which is precisely why, with Booker steadfastly attributing the western to the brothers' most favored genre, "[n]o other film genre is so centrally concerned with constructing (or later deconstructing) a mythic version of America as is the Western" (198).

Upon closer inspection, McCarthy's canon proves to be a flawless haven in which the Coen brothers' long-loved aesthetics in any conceivable front could come to fruition. In genre, McCarthy, too, has been long thought to favor the western in the majority of his novels, specifically *Blood Meridian*, which is believed to be an epic western. Yet, what likens McCarthy's generic arsenal to the Coen brothers' genre subverting affinities should be how McCarthy's westerns tend to be anti-westerns, as Booker contends: "[h]is Westerns, however, might really be seen as anti-Westerns that call attention to shortcomings in the genre, as when the shocking violence of his masterpiece, *Blood Meridian* (1985), reveals the violent tendencies that underlie both the genre and American history itself" (201).

Thus, McCarthy invites the reader not lose sight of the defective nature of the western genre in much the same way as the Coen brothers subvert the same, if not all, genre(s). McCarthy's foray into anti-western genre, I argue, is at its best within the context of *No Country for Old Men*, as all the stereotypical boundaries between the right and wrong, heroes (anti-heroes) and villain, and morality and immorality shatter. The supposed protagonist is killed in the most nebulous way, whereas the phenomenal villain walks away living a life by his absurd ethics. As such, McCarthy, with his code-breaking genre efforts in *No Country for Old Men*, entices, with the most forceful impetus, the brothers to undertake the adaptation of his novel. Added to the cited stimuli is another offering which the brothers seem to be obsessed with and ostensibly unable to turn down and that is how the novel is bereft of any erotic or sex scene. Needless to say, the explicit footprints of violence and entertainment or the reading thrill and the dialogue thereof cannot but be witnessed all throughout the novel, thereby cementing the brothers' decision in taking the project. Last but not least, Chigurh's idiosyncratic character, his absurd ethics and rules, and his amoral affinities

make a destroyer without conscience out of him, which utterly meets the requirement of the brothers.

The interplay between the Coen brothers' visualization of the mythic west and McCarthy's much-admired western tales is another cogent ground for the brothers to opt for the adaption of *No Country for Old Men*: "[t]his shared intention to construct and then deconstruct the boundaries of American cultural myths between the Coen brothers and McCarthy means that when the Coens situate their audiences in the world of McCarthy's novel they lay the foundation for their own conversation about the implications of such myths on American identity" (Carey 22). This close dialogue is rendered further significant once the western "alternate reality" of the Coen brothers converges with the fictitious fallen west of McCarthy, namely his "alternate reality", where the traumatizing villain deconstructs the whole concept of American dream and identity.

A retrospective of the Coen brothers' filmography furnishes the context in which they would promptly approach the adaptation of *No Country for Old Men*. Their violent spectrum broadens its aesthetics from one film to the other: in *Blood Simple* (1984) the Coen brothers opt for plain murderous violence, in *Raising Arizona* (1987) they embark on a naturalistic or social style of violence, in *Miller's Crossing* (1990) they reveal the professional gangster violence, in *Barton Fink* (1991) they imbue their violence with symbolism and imagination, in *Fargo* (1996) they aim at greedy and conspired violence, in *the Big Lebowski* (1998) they unveil the misplaced violence as a result of mistaken identity, in *The Man Who Wasn't There* (2001) they veer in the direction of existential and absurdist violence, in *Intolerable Cruelty* (2003) they exhibit the romantic defensive violence, and in *Ladykillers* (2004) they showcase the comic accidental and situational violence.

Technically viewed, the brothers have an unequivocal mastery of their selected scenes and they literally sculpt their scenes, to provide us with "an amalgam of dark humor and violence, discretion in *mise-en-scène* but a highly stylized concept when the moment demands" (Massias 100). The genres of the mentioned films, in the main, oscillate among crime, noir, neo-noir, comedy, thriller, drama and romance. The novel *No Country for Old Men*, however, completes their stylistic and generic affinities by offering them the opportunity to try their hands at a type of violent style and genre they had never tried before, in that, it, on a stylistic note, enabled them to not only savor the ultimately pure and unrelenting violence with no justifiable way to make sense of it, but also, on a generic note, delve into the genre of western, or otherwise anti-western as

explicated previously. This way, the novel, I argue, marks the shaping of a milestone in the brothers' artistic trajectory, hence their passion for this particular adaptation.

The generic and stylistics of the Coen brothers aside, a glimpse into the idiosyncratic, mediocre and abnormal characters of their films would account for their proclivities towards visualizing Chigurh in *No Country for Old Men*:

> They are individuals who rarely represent a standard genre ideal: Tom Reagan, an Irish gangster void of emotion; Ed Crane, a non-existent barber with the personality of a cadaver; Marge Gunderson, a pregnant small town police chief; The Dude, a left over hippie who yearns for White Russians and bowling; Professor Dorr, an eccentric, Poe-obsessed criminal mastermind; Miles Massey, a love struck divorce attorney. (Doom XIII)

All these abnormalities and idiosyncrasies eventually culminate in a character called Chigurh, who kills with an uncanny cattle gun, which makes him an epitome of emotionlessness among all the previous cold-blooded villain of Coen brothers' movies.

Having elucidated the shared aesthetics between McCarthy and the Coen brothers, it is an opportune moment now to approach the visual essence of the monologues in the Coen brothers' adaptation. There could have been a myriad ways by which the Coen brothers could have had their camera unfold the narrative of *No Country for Old Men*, yet the film opens with the disconsolate voice of Tommy Lee Jones as Sheriff Bell revealing McCarthy's authorial voice. Should one divide the narrative onto two planes, the first will be thrill and entertainment of the cat and mouse game, from which the alleged shallowness of the film arises, and the second will encompass the intellectual jeremiad constituted by thirteen monologues altogether, from which the depth of the narrative is derived. The Coen brothers prefer to shape the outset of their film by the latter, namely the nostalgically intellectual ruminations of Sheriff Bell, which informs the depth of the narrative. The brothers, however, would not suffice to entail solely one monologue in the opening scene, but instead they innovatively fused three monologues of chapters I, III, and IV. This cannot but mean the brothers do not tend to miss out on monologue aesthetics, which shapes the salient features of the deep plane I previously spoke of. Below, I have dissected the opening voice-over of the film citing the chapter to which each monologue excerpt belongs:

"*I was sheriff of this county when I was twenty-five. Hard to believe. Grandfather was a lawman. Father too. Me and him was sheriff at the same time, him in Plano and me here. I think he was pretty proud of that. I know I was*." (McCarthy chapter IX)

"*Some of the old-time sheriffs never even wore a gun. A lot of folks find that hard to believe. Jim Scarborough never carried one. That's the younger Jim. Gaston Boykins wouldn't wear one. Up in Comanche County*." (McCarthy chapter III)

"*I always liked to hear about the oldtimers. Never missed a chance to do so. Nigger Hoskins over in Bastrop County knowed everbody's phone number off by heart*." (McCarthy chapter III)

"*You can't help but compare yourself against the oldtimers. Can't help but wonder how they would've operated these times*." (the Coen brothers)

"*There was this boy I sent to the gas chamber at Huntsville here a while back. My arrest and my testimony. He killed a fourteen-year-old girl. Papers said it was a crime of passion but he told me there wasn't any passion to it. Told me that he'd been planning to kill somebody for about as long as he could remember. Said that if they turned him out he'd do it again. Said he knew he was going to hell. Be there in about fifteen minutes. I don't know what to make of that. I surely don't."* (McCarthy chapter I)

"*The crime you see now, it's hard to even take its measure. It's not that I'm afraid of it.*" (the Coen brothers)

"*I always knew you had to be willing to die to even do this job -- not to be (sound in the novel) glorious. But I don't want to push my chips forward and go out and meet something I don't understand.*" (McCarthy chapter I).

"*You can say it's my job to fight it but I don't know what it is anymore....More than that, I don't want to know.*" (the Coen brothers)

"*A man would have to put his soul at hazard...*" (McCarthy chapter I)

"He would have to say, okay, I'll be part of this world." (the Coen brothers)

It is irrevocably tactful of the Coen brothers to have selectively incorporated the most seminal McCarthy quotes into one thought-provoking voice-over in order to allow the mood of their film to be consonant with the very same concerns embedded in the literary source. In other words, the opening voice-over is an amalgamation of the majority of McCarthy's traumatized/traumatizing

staples, which come alive through the utterances of Sheriff Bell. On closer inspection, however, once can detect a truly vast discrepancy only in the last excerpt when the Coen brothers say *"He would have to say, okay, I'll be part of this world*.", whereas McCarthy writes "*And I think a man would have to put his soul at hazard. And I wont do that. I think now that maybe I never would"* (5). This irreconcilable contrast between the two sources should be the very impetus behind Flory's words in inviting the critics as well as the viewers to stave off the passive defeatism, which has plagued the soul of Sheriff in facing the new evil, and instead rise to the occasion (134). The Coen brothers, I should suggest, could have kept loyal to all the excerpt save for this, which means they, albeit in the awe of McCarthy's jeremiad, tend to dismiss the tone of surrender with which the whole narrative is imbued.

The Caruthian incomprehensibility of trauma portrayed by monologues, in like manner, informs a great proportion of the Coen brothers' visual aesthetics. The Coen brothers furnish the context for this nostalgic incomprehensibility through a certain auditory and visual arsenal. In doing so, the brothers employ a deeply wounded voice like Tommy Lee Jones's voice "with a palpable sense of sadness, fear, resignation, and loss" (Flory 122). This auditory thread, together with the tepid howling of the wind, is juxtaposed with certain shots which imply not only the crestfallen Bell but also the fallen west. Sheriff's disappointed voice sits akin to the utterly black screen on which "NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN" is written. The voice subtly runs in tandem with the howling later.

No sooner the blackness fades away than the dark mountain shot emerges. Deeply shaded and motionless landscapes coupled with the dawn and the nascent sunrise follow suit. All these gloomy western shots are amalgamated with the traumatized and disillusioned voice-over of Tommy Lee Jones. The chosen shots evince a profoundly interwoven association between the barren non-human habitats and dark landscapes, which could imply the fallen humanity and the imminent evil which has already plagued the crumbled America respectively (See appendix: Figures 1-5). All this coded and edited imagery reinforces the inconsolable tone of Tommy Lee Jones in the opening scene, hence a vivid portrayal of the incomprehensible trauma: "[t]he first few images and sounds of the film, then, carefully augment Bell's soliloquy on evil and its subsequent pairing with an example of what he is talking about by encouraging viewers to let themselves experience the troubled, contemplative mood exemplified by this aging Sheriff" (122).

The Coen brothers' visual architecture and the vocal mastery of Jones together give rise to what is called a mood of "introspection", which is triggered efficiently by the opening scene of the film, as Flory further comments:

> Bell's thoughtful, nostalgic monologue instantiates an 'emotional episode' that urges viewers to experience and thereby take up his overarching mood, which the filmmakers augment by pairing his words with carefully selected images and sounds that seek to enhance their affective enticement. The emotional experience encouraged by the opening scenes, then, aims to bring viewers into an introspective mood state by self-consciously exemplifying *how* they should approach the problem depicted in the narrative: reflectively, thoughtfully, as well as with a sense of anxious loss regarding simpler times. (123)

Objectively viewed, Sheriff Bell's mood, from which all the introspective contemplations arise, is the very nexus of the mood of the film. Thus, the more the Coen brothers master this mood and the nuances thereof in the opening scene, the better the whole mood of the film could be conveyed. The traumatized psyche of Bell and his lack of perceiving the new evil, in Caruthian terms, has been masterfully captured in the light of the Coen brothers' thought-provokingly gloomy images and Tommy Lee Jones's defeated voice.

From McCarthy's Dream Monologue to the Brothers' Actual Dialogue

Another paramount monologue which plays a quintessential role in our exegesis of not only the essence of trauma in the film but also the mood as well as the thematic messages conveyed to the audience should be the ending scene monologue, which is taken, word by word save for a word or two, from the novel. The monologue goes:

> *I had two dreams about him after he died. I dont remember the first one all that well but it was about meetin him in town somewheres and he give me some money and I think I lost it. But the second one it was like we was both back in older times and I was on horseback goin through the mountains of a night. Goin through this pass in the mountains. It was cold and there was snow on the ground and he rode past me and kept on goin. Never said nothin. He just rode on past and he had this*

> *blanket wrapped around him and he had his head down and when he rode past I seen he was carryin fire in a horn the way people used to do and I could see the horn from the light inside of it. About the color of the moon. And in the dream I knew that he was goin on ahead and that he was fixin to make a fire somewhere out there in all that dark and all that cold and I knew that whenever I got there he would be there. And then I woke up.* (McCarthy 159)

Before approaching the Coen brothers' visual semiotics of this scene, it is crucial to shed some quick light on the hermeneutics of this monologue excerpt selected by the Coen brothers for their film. Many critical readings apropos this dream sequence unanimously aim at a nihilist dark stance taken by Sherriff Bell. That the father moves ahead not even noticing his son, this study suggests, cannot bode well and might even be suggestive of a more oblivious future. In the words of McFarland, "…there will be no fire in the darkness, that his father will not be waiting. It is too easy to say that west Texas in 1980 is no place for an old man. Bell's recognition is deeper and more disturbing than that" (167). The same sentiment permeates Estes's vision when he holds "[y]et the dream is decidedly melancholic when considered in light of the novel's title" (188). All this melancholic voice, is, I maintain, an affirmation of the Caruthian jargon of incomprehensibility, Freudian repetition compulsion or acting-out, and Lacapra's melancholy.

A similar proposition informs Adams's critical interpretation of this symbolic dream. Noting the fact that the fire is not handed down to the son, Adams argues for Bell's disbelief in a redemptive afterlife: "[w]e are left with the sense that Bell is losing his belief in an afterlife where he would be reunited with his father, joining him in the light and safety of his fire…" (178). Underscoring the significance of the sentence "And then I woke up", the critic, in effect, argues for "an awakening to and acceptance of man's absurdity in a universe indifferent to his existence" (178). This dark end keeps the viewer in the dark, hence a sense of bafflement which arises from the open-ended nature of the scene, which sits akin to all the closure-free movies of the Coen brothers, hence all the more reason to lure the brothers into visualizing the novel, and particularly this monologue excerpt.

The exegetic account I put forth concerning Bell's dream could be approached though the critical trauma thinking of Lacapra, Zizek and Onega/Ganteau, who, unanimously underline the significance of symbols and images for the trauma victims who have trouble coming to terms with the essence of the traumatic event. In the words of Zizek, the victim has to destabilize the devastating impact of the traumatic event through creating a symbolic web of images around

him/her (47). Within the context of *No Country for Old Men,* and particularly in interrogating the traumatized psyche of Sheriff Bell who constantly acts out in the face of the new evil, the figure of father, I argue, is the most prominent symbol Bell can resort to.

The figure of father has been more than a simple controversy, ranging from a conniving thief in the *Orchard Keeper* to infant-abandoning father in *Outer Dark* to the contemptuous father in *Suttree* to the sympathetic father in *All the Pretty Horses*. Yet, later, in *The Road*, the figure soars to the zenith of protection, compassion and sacrifice. The father figure is beyond nebulous in *No Country for Old Men*, as Bell, the voice of McCarthy says: "[t]he other thing is that I have not said much about my father and I know I have not done him justice" (15). Thus, wallowing in his remorseful inability to understand the new evil and the world in which he lives, Bell is awed by his father as a larger than life person, to whom he will always be a child. This symbolic web, together with the Promethean fire carried in the hands of the father, gives rise to a figure more than solely an individual father but an archetypal one. This archetypal analysis calls for the name of Jung as he was the first person to be credited with archetypal criticism in literature:

> In Jungian terms, the image precedes all of Bell's ideas, and the grotesquely heavy mythological weight of the father in his dream explains Bell's inability to work out any coherent thoughts to explain an overwhelming feeling that, in comparison to his father, he must forever remain a child. Jung insists that before the idea comes the image… Because Bell cannot see an image of himself realizing his father potential, that potential is only available projected outside him, in the form of the archetypal father figure we recognize in his final dream. (Ellis 160).

Thus, Bell's father, to remind Jung's theory of "the collective unconscious", is not the individual father but an archetypal father who "represents all fathers" (163). Thus, in order to cope with the new face of trauma, Sheriff Bell can take shelter in Zizek's symbolic, or Jungian archetypal father. Archetype or symbolic, the concept of father is the vague hope to which Bell has recourse, to cope with the tormenting traumas whose plague he cannot free himself of.

Perhaps the stark difference between the textual and visual account here is that, this monologue, in essence, transforms into a dialogue in the film, whose other side is Loretta Bell (Tess Harper). This shift, per se, is more than vital. Skillfully turning a monologue to a dialogue,

the Coen brothers, I purport, are, wittingly or unwittingly, practicing the "talking cure" whose theoretical implications have already been explicated. All throughout the novel, Sheriff Bell seems to be frustrated with having no caring listener for his lamenting monologues. The Coen brothers, against the passive solo nature of the monologues of the novel, engage Loretta in this thematically crucial conversation, which is occasionally interrupted by exchanging the meaningful eye contact or the gaze between the two. That the most passionate and compassionate, if not the only, character of the narrative, is profoundly engaged in a dialogue with a traumatized psyche is reason enough for Bell, or the audience, to, as least, grow a beacon of hope for a future heralding a fortunate change. The monologue to dialogue transformation, which is the creative product of the brothers' adaptation, closely ties it to the therapeutic "talking cure", whose analytical ground has been discussed before.

The nature of this double-sided dialogue as opposed to the dour soliloquys of the novel is rendered further significant once we compare the caring listening side (Loretta) of this conversation to the emotionless character of Chigurh or a lost cause like Moss, not to mention all the other money-grubbing corrupt murderous gangsters. This is precisely the realm within which the testimonial acts of listening and speaking operate. What adds further to the visual aesthetic of this sequence, is how the brothers hold shots on both characters' faces juxtaposing their expressions with each other, while the full and intermittent silence of Loretta and Bell, respectively, build up the tension of the unfolding dialogue. The defeated expression on the face of Bell, I should note, seems to be helped in a great deal by ethically concerned smile taking its shape on the face of Loretta; the smile which invites Bell as well as the audience to move beyond the nostalgia and face up to the evil (see appendix: Figures 6-7). This active engagement, Coen brothers should strive to convey, holds its closest analogy to their sole manipulation of the opening scene monologue, where the Coen brothers' sentence "*He would have to say, okay, I'll be part of this world*." conquers the place of McCarthy's "*And I think a man would have to put his soul at hazard. And I wont do that. I think now that maybe I never would*" (5). Thus, the textual passive defeat, I conclude, is replaced with the visual active engagement, which, by and large, came to fruition at the hands of talking cure or the testimonial acts of listening and speaking.

Apart from the Caruthian dialectics of incomprehensibility, Felman's responsive testimony and solitude, and Hustvedt's taking cure, which lie behind the existential essence of McCarthy monologues, one might duly ask why are all these testimonial commentaries *italicized*? An in-

depth examination of McCarthy monologues in *No Country for Old Men* reveals that these commentaries have nothing to do with the plot and the narration thereof. Put differently, the monologues, albeit bitter in essence, instill a sort of insight and prophetic tone in the narrative, adding nothing remarkable to the plot in terms of the twists and thrill. Hinging on the concept of incomprehensibility of the modern traumatic world and the testimonial ruminations thereof, these monologues occur on an utterly differently plane.

If one decides to divide the narrative onto two planes, the first will be the shallow suspenseful cat and mouse game, whereas the second will encompass the intellectual contemplations constituted by thirteen monologues altogether, from which the depth of the narrative emanates. As cited in chapter one, with a vehement propensity for creating its own narrative thread, trauma shapes its own storytelling which isolates itself from the narrative. Informed by "memories of war, rape, near-fatal accidents", Hustvedt argues for a separate thread of traumatic narration stating, "Trauma isn't part of the story; it is outside story. It is what we refuse to make part of our story" (51-52). McCarthy, then, seems to unwittingly depict this dichotomy between the main narrative and the traumatic thread by means of italicization. And ostensibly, it works to the best of its magnitude, alienating the reader right at the outset of each chapter.

The isolation-centered nature of traumatic thread also evokes Baer's critical lens when he coins the "twofold structural disjunction" in addressing this phenomenon. Ronnel's critical modality, too, incites the same dynamics for how memory functions within or without its capacity to incorporate the traumatic experience into its mental archives. Within the context of *No Country for Old Men*, the testimonial confessions of Sherriff Bell or otherwise monologues seem to occupy a place far beyond the cat-mouse chase thrill offered by the primary plotline, hence meaningfully italicized. The italicized deep monologues, on one plane, pit their powerful traumatizing aesthetics against the entertaining superficial suspense, on the other. These two planes contribute to a versatile joy of reading, and simultaneously warning the reader to keep track of the serious messages once their reading steps into the italic section, hence no obfuscation whatsoever.

From Chigurh's Loss/Absence to Bell's Acting-Out

Of profound and germane significance here is the concept of absence/loss set forth by LaCapra. Having delineated most of the foundational staples of LaCapra's trauma discourse in my previous

chapter, I am intending to solely move towards the partial specifics from which my current discussions could benefit. In LaCapra's parlance, absence/loss dichotomy should be treated with utmost care inasmuch as their holistic and specific temporalities, respectively, are not meant to be tampered with. Once the conflation of the two occurs, certain complexities with insurmountable barriers will arise.

However, the movement of loss towards absence, LaCapra contends, is far more melancholic and irreversible compared to that of absence to loss. If one is to do justice to the context of *No Country for Old Men* in the larger scheme of absence/loss, Chigurh's traumatic presence, I would hypothesize, is the closest we can get to the entity of loss, for losses are specific and particular and pertain more to certain types of traumatic behavior than some vague non-existent entities. Nevertheless, Chigurh harbors some absence-oriented features such as his phenomenally novel nature and an unprecedented traumatic behavior, more in lines with "something one has never had in the first place" (LaCapra 701). Nonetheless, his mere existence, albeit phenomenally vile and robotically murderous, is indicative of its specific entity, hence more of a loss than an absence.

Resting assured Chigurh's existence is the traumatic loss of the narrative, one, I suggest, should next approach the trajectory along which Chigurh's traumatic behavior conflates absence and loss. Two courses of interpretation are open to our advance here. The first course pertains to how Chigurh's traumatic behavior is inclined to have the characters, particularly Sheriff Bell, and the audience transform the loss into an elusive entity like absence. From LaCapra's vantage point, if loss (Chigurh) mutates into absence (decaying America), an irreversibly unpleasant saga of melancholy, impossible mourning and nostalgia will prevail.

This is, I would argue, precisely what we deal with in the context of *No Country for Old Men*. Since the phenomenally destructive image of Chigurh is so compelling, ghostly, and omnipotent, one seems to find no way of making sense of this character and consequently transform it into a newly born set of schemas regarding the nature of trauma, hence an utterly misplaced trauma culture, which cannot be coped with except through lament and misplaced nostalgia. Put differently, the individual and specific loss derived from Chigurh's trauma, owing to its extremely uncanny yet compelling nature, is likely to transform into a wider and more ubiquitous culture of absence, which could be analogously likened to the decaying America. This transformation, as LaCapra posits, brings nothing but melancholy, lament and nostalgia, which is

evidently witnessed in the psyche of most of the characters, particularly Sheriff Bell. Let us borrow LaCapra's precise words to describe this inconsolable state of the psyche prevailing in the characters of the narrative: "one faces the impasse of endless melancholy, impossible mourning, and interminable aporia" (LaCapra, Writing History 28).

Apart from being instanced as the most emblematic trauma of inhumanity in the light of my explications of Chigurh, Chigurh's character becomes more prone to the loss-to-absence transformation through being devoid of any connection to other humans. This, I would propose, alienates and deepens the loss further gravitating it towards LaCapra's jeopardizing concept of absence. In the words of Steakley, "[t]he absence of connection with other human beings puts Chigurh in sharp contrast to Sheriff Bell, whose italicized commentary is rooted in his connections to family and community" (160). Not only does this alienating quality serve as a catalyst in the loss-to-absence transformation, but it further deepens the distance between Sheriff and Chigurh. This gap cannot be bridged except through nostalgic laments in the guise of monologues. Thus, monologues are McCarthy's way of dealing with LaCapra's rhetoric of loss/absence, or particularly the irreversible process of transformation of loss to absence. Absence of connections, passion and compassion is vividly detected upon another purely dispassionate murder Chigurh commits in the Eagle Pass shoot-out. McCarthy's crafted and innovative depiction of this ruthless murder, I should not hesitate to suggest, makes this murder scene the most inhumanely traumatizing instance of all[26]:

> The man he'd shot in the back was lying there watching him. Chigurh looked up the street toward the hotel and the courthouse. The tall palm trees. He looked at the man. The man was lying in a spreading pool of blood. Help me, he said.
> Chigurh took the pistol from his waist. He looked into the man's eyes. The man looked away. Look at me, Chigurh said. The man looked and looked away again.
> Do you speak English?
> Yes.
> Dont look away. I want you to look at me.
> He looked at Chigurh. He looked at the new day paling all about. Chigurh shot him through the forehead and then stood watching. Watching the capillaries break up in his eyes. The light receding. Watching his own image degrade in that squandered world. He shoved the pistol in his belt and looked back up the street once more. Then he picked up the bag and slung the Uzi over his shoulder and

[26] One of the elliptical instances in the Coen brothers' adaptation of the novel, and an unjustifiable void to many, is the scene where Chigurh, in cold blood, shoots the Mexican gangster in the Eagle Pass shoot-out after wounding Moss. He stands over him while watching his eyes' capillaries break up. Albeit pivotal to McCarthy's intense portrayal of Chigurh's psychic state, the scene is missed out in Coen brothers' film.

> crossed the street and went limping on toward the hotel parking lot where he'd left his vehicle. (64)

Watching the capillaries of a dying man break up while also noticing his own image degrading in a squandered world leaves nothing short of a transformation, which culminates in a total absence. Subtly enough, McCarthy's language nuances, wittingly or unwittingly, exhibit the same fact, when Chigurh's image (as a certain loss) degrades in a "squandered world" (absence or in better terms the fallen or decaying America or West). This transformation becomes even further substantiated once we take heed of Chigurh's state of isolation as in how he is never attached to any person, be they family or acquaintance, whosoever. It is as though he has landed on Earth from an alien world, hence once more the quote "something one has never had in the first place." Let us refer to the words of Steakley once again: "[h]e is a killer, but he is also pure, having never had any motive other than spreading death. He is methodical and precise, and his interest in watching people die seems dispassionate, almost clinical…he seems to have no history and no family and no connection to people other than the business that allows him to fulfill his purpose" (161).

Apart from the absence of human connections and compassion, which renders Chigurh further prone to the loss-to-absence transformation, Chigurh's soulless character is yet another realm in which this process could be invigorated. Indeed, the very reason why Chigurh is looking the dying man in the eye in the above-portrayed scene, O'Donnell[27] asserts, is that he intends to witness the dying man's soul; something he is deprived of (21).This account puts Chigurh akin to the very person Bell sends to the gas chamber at the very outset of the novel insofar as they both lack soul: "according to Bell, a fundamental absence--the absence of a soul--marks the boy he sent to death row, who murdered his girlfriend for no reason, and also marks Chigurh, who murders at a coin toss" (Cooper qtd. in O'Donnell 21). Thus, through a myriad of absent characteristics, namely absent human connections, emotions, compassion, soul, and sexuality[28], the loss is prone

[27] Employing George Bataille's notion of General Economy, O'Donnel explores the roots of the phenomenal violence in *No country for Old Men*, namely Chigurh's violence, in the "displacement of desire away from sexual experience and towards a violence centered on firearms" (17). Being void of sexual adventures, the novel is a clear example of how, from Batailles' lens, sexual repression culminates in irreversible violence as the only alternative left for sublimation.

[28] Chigurh's character is the most sexually null and the most violently occupied character in the novel. This disproportionate collaboration occupies the heart of Bataille's theoreatical framework. According to his lights, the accumulated energy in individuals can be expended either through violence or sex. All throughout the novel, one never stumbles upon any occasion where Chigurh's sexuality is discussed.

to transforming into absence. This transformation process is expedited once we take into account the catalytic agents such as his ethnically, meaningfully and historically untraceable name, and his utterly unknown past. Thus, Chigurh's loss, as a specific and historical trauma within the tangible framework of the narrative, fades away towards the unknown untraceable and ahistorical trauma titled absence in LaCapra's poetics, which, I argue, stands for a wider misplaced nostalgic fallen America.

LaCapra's specific rhetoric of loss (Chigurh) has a propensity for transforming itself to a wider absence-based realm, namely the decaying America, or more specifically the west. Fusing the concept of trauma with mythologies of old west and American Exceptionalism, Harrison sheds light on how American Exceptionalism and the mythic west struggle in the face of certain novel traumas such as the 9/11 attacks. On Chigurh's aberrant traumatizing approach, he writes:

> Chigurh constitutes the end, the terminal moment of existence for all he encounters, the anti-mythic force with its closing down of all futures, for those who cross his path, and for the country he terrorises. Chigurh represents the elemental adversary in the timeless trial from the past that must be overcome if the progressive march of history is to be sustained…His termination of everyone that he encounters and his seemingly indestructible nature reveal, however, the unending struggle at the heart of the exceptionalist narrative with its reliance on crisis, trauma and survival. His continued existence 'out there' reveals how this American narrative is not actually one of crisis overcome, but one of perpetual crisis and struggle sustained. (201)

Resembling his truly indestructible nature, as something USA or West fails "to acknowledge existence of" (McCarthy 130), his apparatus of death is nothing short of a disillusioning or anti-mythic force: "[e]ven Chigurh's instrument of death, an air-powered cattle gun, reducing his victims to the status of beef slaughtered in vast soulless steel factories, carries with it a demythologising force, a sardonically twisted comment on the corruption of the heroic cowboy myth into mechanised violence" (202). This anti-mythic reading, in like manner, establishes its nexus in the contemplations of Estes contending "*No Country for Old Men* presents us with a world that is broken" (179).

This myth sabotaging force, embodied by Chigurh in *No Country for Old Men*, which tends to approach the irreversible border point of loss/absence conflation in LaCapra's jargon, is omnipresent in most of McCarthy's canon. Conceived of as "prophet of destruction" in *No Country for Old Men*, this vile force has permeated all McCarthy's oeuvre from Ballard in *Child of God* to Judge Holden in *Blood Meridian* to Chigurh in *No Country for Old Men*. Ballard, in what is characterized as necrophilia, shoots his victims only to make love to them later, while judge Holden kills children, collects scalps, dances wildly and never dies. Chigurh, as the ultimate comfort bullet shot at the human civilization, carves out a third eye on the forehead of his victims using a cattle gun implying the degradation of humanity to cattle. Forty years into his prolific writing and having published eight novels, "McCarthy finally gives a name to a character that has been a core element of his writing from day one" (Steaklely 150), namely "prophet of destruction". The flagrant violence and barbarity which McCarthy's destruction prophets harbor is a concern without which McCarthy would not deem a narrative worthwhile. In his own words, "[t]here is no such thing as life without bloodshed" (qtd. in Hage 4).

Death and blood pervading the mythic west and the southern wilderness of the United States have been the most indispensable McCarthy trademarks by means of which his destruction prophets operate through his narratives. Privileged and graced by biblical aesthetics[29], McCarthy presumably opts for portraying demonic or satanic antagonists who, against the odds, survive.

[29] Stylistically viewed, McCarthy engineers, calculates and sculpts his texts. Surgical precision and painstaking details are the terms I would utilize to characterize his writing. Lincoln's depiction aptly captures the soul of his stylistics: "[c]haracteristically, for McCarthy by now, there's a page number every other page, missing apostrophes in the local speech, no quote marks and acres of white space around the dialogue, big gaps and jump cuts between scenes" (142). Later, Lincoln sheds light on the technical aspects of his storytelling:

> "How to pace a plot and set a story. 'If the heroin is missing and the money is missing then my guess is that somebody is missing.' How to draw character from single detail. A clerk looks into Chigurh's eyes. 'Blue as lapis. At once glistening and totally opaque. Like wet stones.' Satan plays on the thousand-meter-stare of soldiers who have seen too much. *Lapis negra* cobalt eyes—you won't look into them twice. The craft of all this shows in the words to tell a story clean as picked bone, brackish as a festered wound, ominous as desert talus obscuring a horizon of red-eyed jackals. Slow, accretive, local detail inches toward action with real human characters in all their working, small-town class, or lack. The real talk is nasty, brutish, short, and deadly honest. Telegraphic sentences. Abrupt fragments" (143).

Deeply indebted to Faulkner, his works have been informed by and compared to many renowned writers such as Hemingway. Conceived of as an idiosyncratic stylist, his "style also crystallized into a heightened language that came off as both timeless and antiquarian, and that seemed to draw on and ultimately sublimate Melville, the Bible, and Ernest Hemingway" (Lincoln 3).

Perhaps, this is McCarthy's way of confronting with the dark humanity: no emancipation, frank and flat loss, detailed agony, and scarce, if not no, use of psychology.

The second course which is open to our advance in interrogating LaCapra's absence/loss hermeneutics within the context of *No Country for Old Men* is through the anxiety which absence brings about. According to LaCapra, a sense of anxiety is attendant upon the concept of absence, which cannot be obliterated unless one is able to convert it to loss via seeking a specific source from which the sense of anxiety or fear emanates. As the victim cannot come to terms with the absence-fueled anxiety, LaCapra conceives, and as loss, compared to absence, can be worked through far more efficaciously, the victim is to find a tangible, against the horrifying ambiguity of absence, source for his anxiety only to later eliminate it, hence a recovery from the pitfall of absence. Within the context of *No Country for Old Men*, one, without further ado, can readily witness the overwhelming body of anxiety attendant upon Sheriff Bell's psyche in the face of the newly evolved absence derived from the phenomenal "prophet of destruction". The more Bell strives to makes sense of this phenomenon in ways of locating a source for his existence or nature, the more his efforts fail him. Neither able to locate a tangible source for his anxiety nor consequently successful in facilitating the process of transforming absence to loss, Bell, if not all the characters, is mired in his formless circumstance.

Having lost his psyche to the overwhelming anxiety of LaCapra's absence as a result of the transformation of loss (Chigurh) to absence (the fallen America), Sheriff Bell tries his hand at locating an identifiable source, namely chasing Chigurh, for this absence in order to eliminate him. He does not but fail here as well. Thus, the sense of absence and the anxiety thereof grows in his already lost psyche. Left with no choice but to "treat absence as absence" (LaCapra 707), Sheriff Bell faces nothing but "non-redemptive ambivalence" (707). The indeterminate absence takes over and the psyche is haunted and such "hauntology" (qtd in LaCapra, Writing History 33), with whose coinage Derrida[30] should be credited, prevails.

Inextricably laced with the current strand of arguments is the dichotomy of Freudian acting-out and working-through, which is tantamount to melancholia and mourning respectively. Reliving the traumatic experience over and over in his/her memory, the victim is bound to repeat the moment, hence the denomination "compulsion to repeat" by Freud. However, this vicious

[30] See *Spectres of Marx* (1993), in which Derrida combines the terms "haunt" and "ontology" to introduce the neologism of "hauntology", to denote the incessant ontological haunting or the haunting ontology of the past events whose ghostly presence would never leave the individual.

compulsion pits itself against the eventual understanding of the trauma, thereby allowing the victim to initiate the remedial or therapeutic course of mourning.

Despite all the critical negation leveled at the Caruthian jargon of trauma censuring her for her fixation on the acting-out phase or the incomprehensibility barrier, one cannot help but notice how Caruthian parlance serves our analysis as a veritable haven within which the trauma dynamics of *No Country for Old Men* operate. Sheriff Bell's dour pessimism, defeatism and disillusionment leave very little room for any progressive trend towards the efficacious possibilities of mourning or working-through. He seems to be regressively mired in his sorrow, as opposed to mournful, for the phenomenon he cannot possibly make sense of. In other words, nostalgia has overcome his soul; something which is absent in Chigurh as the perpetrator of this acting-out.

An incontrovertible manifestation of Bell's acting-out, I should suggest, is the passive nihilism which befalls his psyche in the face of an inscrutable phenomenon called Chigurh. His monologues are precisely identical to what Freudian "compulsion to repeat" has to offer, in that Sheriff strives to reiterate the repressed incomprehensible moments in the guise of confessions or testimonies in much the same way a patient in the course of psychoanalysis reveals, wittingly or otherwise, his unconscious. With Freudian stance in mind, this repetitive saga of symptoms, be they verbal or behavioral, should pave the way towards the moment of emancipation, redemption and mourning. Nonetheless, Sheriff sinks down to the trappings of Nietzsche's passive nihilism:

> In becoming disillusioned with his old values, Bell feels confused and defeated. He has lost faith in what had formerly given meaning and value to his life. Such a collapse of belief in previously held values is what Nietzsche describes as passive nihilism (17–18). Of course, Nietzsche also argues that this state of meaninglessness could be counteracted by an active nihilism that worked to transform old, rejected values into new, meaningful ones, but Bell is nowhere near that stage. (Flory 127)

This absurdist viewpoint, Flory warns, should not be identified with, notwithstanding Bell's deeply wounded soul. If one does not wish to be plagued with terms such as LaCapra's melancholia, Freud's acting out or constant lament, one has to move beyond the nostalgia and face up to evil, for what the world does not need at this stage is another Sheriff Bell:

> The narrative implies that nostalgia leaves us where Bellis at the end of the film as well as the novel: dreaming of finding a better way within what he knows, but knowing at the same time that it won't fit the harsh reality of evils that exist around him. Such a failure is, of course, passively nihilistic, and the film's conclusion drives home the point that such an unimaginative perspective regarding evil can even assist in its continuance and proliferation by providing at best lackluster, misdirected responses to it. (129)

At this juncture, I should wish to shed some quick light on the concept of belatedness and its pertinent contribution to the hermeneutics of trauma in *No Country for Old Men*. As detailed in chapter one, the traumatic experience, notes Caruth relying on Freudian tenets, is too much to be incorporated into the psyche of the victim in the moment of trauma, thereby urging the victim to accommodate this incorporation afterward, which evokes the famed "afterwardsness" coined by Laplanche. Later, defining elements and terms such as "unassimilated", "impossible", "unknown", "un-interpreted", "latent", "deferred" and "revisionist", which were the various interpretational modes of different thinkers in approaching the concept of belatedness, came to light.

In seeking to glean something from the belatedness of trauma in *No Country for Old Men*, I feel inclined to return to Chigurh and his cattle gun. That the moment of trauma requires a certain body of time to be revivified and hence re-interpreted, according to the lights of Laplanche, is the very principle upon which the whole concept of belatedness is grounded. Within the context of *No Country for Old Men*, the characters are not provided with the latency period to develop a sense of cognition regarding the accident, hence their shock and alienation. In Caruthian terms, the "incubation period" is not achieved and the victim does not traverse the temporal distance to grow out of this alienation, and in fact, most of them meet their demise before they even know what traumatized them. They are exposed to an unprecedented traumatic tool such as a cattle gun whose owner is yet another traumatic phenomenon, yet they are never given "another time, another place" (Caruth 17). The only "afterwarsdness" the characters get is their demise coming at the hands of Chigurh or the cattle gun shortly afterward. Bell seems to be the only character who is left unharmed for a while to make sense of the trauma. Yet ostensibly, the temporal distance is not traversed sufficiently for him either, hence his sense of defeat.

The emphatic intersection in which both Caruth and Laplanche meet apropos the concept of belatedness is the very nexus of what is not known, either at the very outset of the traumatic trajectory or the later moments. Taking into account the very unknown nature of Chigurh and even more unknown, if not defamiliarizing, nature of the cattle gun, one could readily discern the very vexing nature of the trauma at work here. The unknown nature of cattle gun and Chigurh aside, the whole novel is replete with countess instantiations of the phrase "I don't know", particularly in monologues, whose mention cannot be feasible here given the scope of this study. Sheriff Bell expresses his discomfort of not knowing or his inability to make sense of the new traumas upon many occasions, yet the occasion I would like to choose in which I can investigate the precise concept of belatedness is when he, in a spirit of confessions, reveals to Uncle Ellis how he left all his comrades behind and fled the battle field in the Second World War:

> So now you're fixin to tell me what you done.
> Yessir.
> When it got dark.
> When it got dark. Yessir.
> What did you do?
> I cut and run. (131)

Shamed and disdained by this trauma, Bell intended to turn down the medal, yet he was scolded by his superior officer: "[a]nd I told him I didnt want it. And he just set there lookin at me and directly he said: I'm waitin on you to tell me your reasons for wantin to refuse a military commendation" (129). Many years later, Bell's traumatized psyche has not recovered from the blight of this wound. This is precisely why I think this traumatic memory befits my argument here, as the latency period seems to have lost its efficacy in helping Bell to come to terms with the gravity of his shameful cut and run:

> Come daylight I laid up in a patch of woods. What woods it was. That whole country looked like a burn. Just the treetrunks was all that was left…I thought after so many years it would go away. I dont know why I thought that. Then I thought that maybe I could make up for it and I reckon that's what I have tried to do. (130-131)

Balaev's Growth vs. Caruth's Intergenerational Trauma

Balaev's thought currents find their way of engagement with the trauma framework of *No Country for Old Men*. As an opposing voice, Balaev diverged from the Caruthian parlance on many fronts, in that she urged trauma scholars to reconsider all the terms like "unrepresentable, unspeakable, timeless, repetitious, contagious and infectious", and instead seek out for untapped alternatives such as rebirth, fluidity and perhaps growth. Let us, she should urge all, not treat trauma like an infectious disease which spreads from and individual to a community or vice versa, whose technical term is transgenerational trauma coined by Caruth. Rather than dissociate, dislocate, and shatter, the victim's subjectivity, Balaev asserts, could be said to be exposed to further growth and fluidity in terms of identity, in the face of a traumatic experience.

Barely can one, within the context of *No Country for Old Men*, find a tangible trace of rebirth and fluidity in any of the characters. Instead, the traumatic Chigurh spreads like a disease traumatizing the people who have not even laid eyes on him, which, for the most part, corresponds closely to the contagious model. Albeit not located a generation later, the trauma plagues the characters in the narrative so heavily as to beat the odds of fluidity and recovery. Most characters, particularly Bell, feel psychically broken, not to mention the ones who are immediately physically broken. Despite the resilience-centered tenet of Stampfl, which bears a striking resemblance to Balaev's trauma model in introducing "uplifting themes to the study of trauma" (136) and setting in motion the "ideas of rebirth or redemption" (136), characters in *No Country for Old Men* are not only not resilient but also prone to surrender and defeat. The traumatizing agent plagues and wounds the psyches which have not been exposed to its threat in practice, which is completely against what Balaev's model hypothesizes.

In a society struck by a phenomenally new and young evil, the old, McCarthy should feel, have to fade away to defeat, thereby impeding the path of redemption and growth. What seems to even aggravate the case is how this new plague, once not fought or cured, is bound to precipitate itself into the very permanent core of the society, shaping the new ontological reality:

> The strategy of resolving conflicts by cognitively processing the pain and open wound (i.e., the trauma) is no longer available. When trauma cannot be processed, or "written," it cannot be overcome. It becomes a wild fantasy that generates reality in the present. An ontological crack is thus opened in the foundations of the

> contemporary world, which adopts evil as an experience of ecstasy and empowerment that is much more potent than the passive and feeble experience of good. Evil and suffering are perceived as primal elements that delineate the borders of a nihilistic outlook. (Gurevitz 21)

This unprocessed, nihilistic, and ontological evil wound, then, pervades the bone marrow of the postmodern[31] society, culminating in "the total collapse of the enlightened scientific/moral rationalism of the West and the conversion of trauma into a sickening cultural and marketing strategy of extreme potency" (22). Thus, not only Balaev's famed "fluid process located in relation to new realities" (9) regarding trauma fails, but the new evil paralyses society in ways more similar to what LaCapra called the trauma culture wallowing in acting-out and melancholy. This is precisely the type of trauma Gurevitz calls "generative" as it generates "a cultural recipe for creating and maintaining the balance of power in society" (23). This way, trauma, to return to Caruth, spreads like contagious disease in a "postmodern reality in which trauma is part of Western rationalism and capitalism" (22-23). This newly established trauma culture, then, would not accommodate Balaev's concepts of rebirth and growth.

In order to instantiate his hypothesis, Gurevits allows Kafka and McCarthy to serve as the cornerstones of his study. Opting for *Blood Meridian* as the most traumatic piece of McCarthy's canon, Gurevits is quick to approach the very character of Judge Holden as the trauma agent who seems to be a new chapter in trauma discourse:

> McCarthy paints the sinister portrait of a pedophile, a psychopath (reminiscent of Chigurh in his novel *No Country for Old Men*) whose mental disorder and murderous philosophy go hand in hand in horrifying harmony with the "humanism," aesthetics, education, macabre sense of humor, intelligence, and

[31] In "Literature as Trauma: The Postmodern Option-Franz Kafka and Cormac McCarthy", Gurevits pits the morally progressive trauma realm in modernism against the ethically regressive nature of postmodernist society:

> "In contrast to the modernist outlook, which sees trauma as an instrument of wisdom and an opportunity to redefi ne human destiny, in the postmodern world we are enveloped in radical fatalism and pessimism that lays bare the perilous seductiveness of trauma—the total collapse of the enlightened scientifi c/moral rationalism of the West and the conversion of trauma into a sickening cultural and marketing strategy of extreme potency" (22).

> fondness for rhetoric that he displays to a band of mad death-defying outlaws as they make their way through life in total darkness. (18-19)

Interestingly enough, Gurevits does not miss out on the analogy between judge Holden and Chigurh's character in *No Country for Old Men*, which facilitates the reasoning of this study to a great extent. Anton Chigurh, in like manner, horrifies the characters with his fetish killing stylistics, imposes his psychopathic intellectuality, defies death upon many occasions, and eventually obliterates the harmony of humanism. The characters, to worsen the matter, are incapable of facing up to him, thereby allowing him to spread like a disease (Caruth), generate a new chapter of trauma reality (Gurevits), and impede the progressive path of growth (Balaev). Eventually, in LaCapra's terms, the society is doomed to fall into the abysmal chasm of melancholy.

Dissolution of identity and collapse of selfhood are some of the bitter consequences of trauma, particularly war trauma, as Mackinon declares in his thesis "the experience of combat precipitates both the dissolution of the identity and the rejection …of subjectivity and individuality" (133). Taking into account the fact that both Bell and Moss are war veterans, one could argue that their psychic traumatization, in the face of a trauma far worse than their war trauma, is further deteriorated. This is particularly evident in the sorrowful words of Bell saying "I was supposed to be a war hero and I lost a whole squad of men. Got decorated for it. They died and I got a medal. I dont even need to know what you think about that" (94). Later, on the same page Bell speaks of the traumas of the previous generations:

> *Two generations in this country is a long time. You're talkin about the early settlers. I used to tell em that havin your wife and children killed and scalped and gutted like fish has a tendency to make some people irritable but they didnt seem to know what I was talkin about. I think the sixties in this country sobered some of em up. I hope it did*. (94).

That Bell is sympathetic with and deeply touched by the gravity of the traumatic accounts depicted above, which befell the lives of previous generations, is vividly an instance of how one's trauma, Caruth' intergenerational model should suggest, is not his/her own. Albeit repudiated by the new thought streams of trauma thinkers such as Balaev, intergenerational trauma is instantiated anew every moment within the context of *No Country for Old Men*. Sheriff Bell, as the central figure of

the novel, moves back and forth in time ruminating constantly over how things, specifically traumatic events, went and how they might go. These sympathetic ruminations range from the victims of the Second World War, to which he bore witness, to previous generation, to eventually later generations. An occasion upon which, Bell sympathizes with the traumas of future is how some parents would not be responsible for raising their own children in future:

> What we thought was that when the next generation come along and they dont want to raise their children neither then who is goin to do it? Their own parents will be the only grandparents around and they wouldnt even raise them. We didnt have a answer about that. On my better days I think that there is somethin I dont know or there is somethin that I'm leavin out. But them times are seldom. (77)

Apart from identifying with his victimized war comrades, the early settlers, and the irresponsible would-be parents, Bell suffers from, on an intergenerational mode, the traumas which plague his family, particularly Harold Ellis's brother, who died is the World War I:

> You ever think about Harold? Bell said.
> Harold?
> Yes.
> Not much. He was some older than me. He was born in ninety-nine. Pretty sure that's right. What made you think about Harold?
> I was readin some of your mother's letters to him, that's all. I just wondered what you remembered about him.
> Was they any letters from him?
> No.
> You think about your family. Try to make sense out of all that. I know what it did to my mother. She never got over it. I dont know what sense any of that makes either. You know that gospel song? We'll understand it all by and by? That takes a lot of faith. You think about him goin over there and dyin in a ditch somewheres. Seventeen year old. You tell me. Because I damn sure dont know. (127)

The state of Bell's traumatized psyche reveals itself simply by how the inception of the conversation was triggered on his behalf. This, I argue, has a lot to do with how Bell is sympathetically remorseful for Harold's death and how, by means of talking, he feels an urge to inform his uncle of how one's trauma is not solely his own. What runs beneath this feeling of remorse, and perhaps shame, must be what Abraham calls the "transgenerational phantom", "which returns to unsettle the present with respect to crimes or transgressions that have not been worked through (or in his preferred concept, "introjected" in contrast to incorporated…)"

(LaCapra, "Trauma, History, Memory", 379). This state of being trans-generationally haunted is expected insofar as Bell's traumatized soul has not gone through working through.

LaCapra's "Trauma, History, Memory, Identity: What Remains?" provides new insight to the study of intergenerational trauma. Predicating his exegesis upon Schwab's *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma,* he concurs with her thesis of the transmission of the feelings of guilt and shame to the descendants of both perpetrators and victims (378). These descendants, Schawb notes, have a face "that is frozen in grief, a forced smile that does not feel quite right, an apparently unmotivated flare-up of rage, or chronic depression" (qtd in LaCapra 379). LaCapra, however, underscores the role of giving testimony in working through this stage as well as the urge to tell ones' story in order to overcome this transgenerational melancholy (381). Within the context of *No Country for Old Men,* one barely witnesses any trace of a genuine smile on the face of Bell. This frozen flat affect leaves no room for the likelihood of the initiation of a mourning trajectory for Bell. Bell, in order to dilute the dense melancholy of his transgenerational traumas, resorts to testimonial monologues. This, to his chagrin, fails, as well.

The Coen Brothers' Carla Jean: A Growing Beacon of Hope

In juxtaposing Coen brothers' adaptation and their intellectual trauma-oriented engagement with the recent progressive and constructive voice of trauma, with Balev at its heart, once can discern certain discrepancies from the novel. As I previously delineated the Coen brothers' somewhat innovative dynamics in visualizing the monologues, a rather similar trend informs their approach apropos the dialectics of the recent voice of trauma. To lay bare trauma's novel dialectics, Balaev's model in the main, in the Coen brothers' adaptation, I would like to opt for the character, and the Coen brothers' characterization of, Carla Jean Moss (Kelly Macdonald), Moss's wife. To initiate my argument, it is of utmost significance to entail one of the most seminal dialogues of the film between Carla Jean and Chigurh, when he shows up at her residence to kill her.

No sooner had she dried the tears of mourning his husband's death than she saw the spectral figure of Chigurh seated at her bedroom desk awaiting her arrival. Dumfounded by the uncanny encounter, she uttered "I knowed you was crazy when I seen you settin there, she said. I knowed exactly what was in store for me" (121). Earnestly and sturdily tied to his words, Chigurh divulges to Carla that he is "at the mercy of the dead, in this case your husband" (121), which means Chigurh

gave his word to Moss that he would kill Carla. Unable to make sense of Chigurh's distorted ethics and principles, Carla tries to reason with him only to be shocked with the coin trick:

> He watched her, his chin in his hand. All right, he said. This is the best I can do. He straightened out his leg and reached into his pocket and drew out a few coins and took one and held it up. He turned it. For her to see the justice of it. He held it between his thumb and forefinger and weighed it and then flipped it spinning in the air and caught it and slapped it down on his wrist. Call it, he said.
> She looked at him, at his outheld wrist. What? She said.
> Call it.
> I wont do it.
> Yes you will. Call it.
> God would not want me to do that.
> Of course he would. You should try to save yourself. Call it. This is your last chance.
> Heads, she said.
> He lifted his hand away. The coin was tails.
> I'm sorry.
> She didnt answer.
> Maybe it's for the best.
> She looked away. You make it like it was the coin. But you're the one.
> It could have gone either way.
> The coin didnt have no say. It was just you.
> Perhaps. But look at it my way. I got here the same way the coin did.
> She sat sobbing softly. She didnt answer. (121)

The interplay between the coin's lifeless existence, yet decisive authority, and how Chigurh instills a sense of agency to the very absurd flip of the coin, albeit paradoxically tossed by him in the first place, give rise to the very philosophical mode of this conversation. What renders this conversation even further vexing is how Chigurh conflates the moment of fate and will through uttering: "[e]very moment in your life is a turning and every one a choosing. Somewhere you made a choice. All followed to this. The accounting is scrupulous. The shape is drawn. No line can be erased" (122). Humans, utters the philosophical Chigurh, who is thought to be the intellectual voice of McCarthy, architect their lives freely only to be alienated by how they cannot escape the ending which they paradoxically and knowingly designed. And in arriving at the pre-destined and unalterable fate, Chigurh "perceives his role only as a blind instrument in the hands of fate, having absolutely no scruples about murdering people, as if he had no say in this matter…" (Ligor 78).

Traumatized by the unfathomable murder of her husband and the death of her chronically cancer-stricken mother, Carla Jean is plagued with her eventual traumatization, namely beholding

the spectral "prophet of destruction". Upon hearing all Chigurh's philosophy, and perhaps sophistry in her eyes, Carla is left with one option which is "calling it", but, much to her chagrin, she calls her death. All the philosophy, traumas, and the game of fate/will, precipitate her into bursting into sobbing. Not being able "to second say the world" (123) and asking her to see what he sees, Chigurh shoots her while she is sobbing. Carla, resembling Chigurh's other victims who quickly rush to utter the words "you don't have to do this", implores Chigurh to "second say" the situation, before closing her eyes.

The traumatized sobbing Carla is portrayed somewhat differently in the Coen brothers' adaptation. The directors elide the majority of the fate/will dialogue and solely leave untouched one thread of their conversation including "I got here the same way the coin did" in response to Carla's "The coin didnt have no say". This thread captures, with great economy and pithiness, the soul of the thematic messages McCarthy might have intended to convey. Bardem's stunningly cool performance and poised postures obviously add to the visual aesthetics of the scene. Macdonald's apt facial expressions achieve, with perfect delicacy and subtlety, the requisite feel of the scene. Yet, the brothers, expectedly, exert their power as well as their liberty in eliding one more thread of the conversation, which is staunchly meaningful. Carla, in this scene, refuses to give in to the absurd yet compelling coin toss game of Chigurh. Furthermore, she neither cries nor sobs. Even though the brothers portray a dolorous Carla, they do not grant her the right to sob.

That Carla in this intellectually significant dialogue decides to disqualify Chigurh's philosophical face should run in tandem with the same subtle shift of McCarthy's "*And I wont do that. I think now that maybe I never would"* to brothers' *"He would have to say, okay, I'll be part of this world*." By deciding not to call, not only does Carla infuriate Chigurh, but she also calls into question her long-cherished principles. Albeit, traumatized by a long and incomprehensible saga of traumas, she decides, the Coen brothers innovate, not to surrender. By uttering "No, I ain't gonna call it", Carla succeeds at even enraging him to an extent that Chigurh's constantly poised affect is fairly distorted (see appendix: figures 8-9). Chigurh's hubris in clinging to his esoteric principles and "the existential arbitrariness of human existence… that has experienced a particularly grim manifestation" (Holtz 41) should jolt Carla into yielding his demand of calling the coin toss, yet she defies him. The Coen brothers, once more in ways analogous to Bell's "*I'll be part of this world*.", take their liberty to diverge from the docile submissive path on which, by and large within the context of *No Country for Old Men*, most victims fall.

This bizarrely rebellious and resilient state of Carla in the Coen brothers' portrayal, which is contrarily tenuous and docile in the novel, should catapult us into Stampfl's resilience model, on which the Coen brothers, most probably unaware of all the theory running beneath their elision, ground their elliptical mode. Apparently, Carla is the first person in the narrative not only to repudiate Chigurh's corrupt ideology by saying "The coin didnt have no say. It was just you", but also to defy Chigurh by deciding not to call, not to mention the extent of her ease and intrepidity in calling him "crazy". The Coen brothers, it seems, perceive this resilience and add to it by removing how she is cajoled to calling the toss. Thus, they unwittingly strive to exhibit traumatized characters on whom the incomprehensible nature of traumatization falls short of power, hence facing up to evil with all they have. They, to add to their elliptical aesthetics, refuse to visualize how Chigurh shoots her only to reveal it later by having Chigurh raise his foot to make sure his boot is not stained by her blood. This, once more, should be rooted at the brothers' sympathetic stance with Carla's resilient psyche, whereas they have no compunction whatsoever in visualizing how Chigurh victimizes all the rest of the characters.

Most germane here is the commentary of Gilmore whose analysis attributes to Carla not only a sense of integrity but also a sense of morality, which is transparently consonant with the concerns of the recent trauma voice. Gilmore's analysis, I am led to infer, is not informed by the delicate comparative discrepancies between the literary source and the visual source, insofar as he is solely aiming at the filmic critique rather than the literary one:

> She will not give her life over to chance and insists that the responsibility for her death lies with Chigurh, not the coin. She forces him to make the choice. In so doing she restores moral judgments to the situation. She will not, in short, speak of "expediency apart from justice." She defies the irrational flip of a coin and retains her integrity. She hurls Chigurh's ironic perversity back into his face: "I knew you was crazy." Although Carla Jean is neither an existential nor a tragic hero, she is, nevertheless, heroic in her unwillingness to abandon the human need to construe the world in moral terms. (174)

LaCapra's remarks apropos the interplay between the identity forming power of the traumatic experience as otherwise opposed to the identity shattering impact of the same experience could be

a very pertinent ground upon which the character of Carla runs counter to the character of Bell: "[t]raumatic experience has dimensions that may threaten or even shatter identity and may not be 'captured' by history…Yet it may paradoxically become the center or vortex-like hole of identity-formation" (391). This argument captures, in perfect economy and tact, the soul of the majority of the trauma arguments I have developed so far, in that trauma either breaks the victim (the old school) or helps the victim grow (the new school). Within the context of *No Country for Old Men*, it is the opposition of a growing resilient Carla to a broken or shattered Bell which showcases this dichotomy to the best of its magnitude.

The Haunting Uncanny Traumas: Death, Silence, and Repetition

I should like to draw this chapter to a close by shedding some light on "the uncanny" and its uncanny implications on the novel and film "*No Country for Old Men*". Without s a shred of doubt, *No Country for Old Men*, is a horrendous condensation of "the uncanny", in the full sense of the term, inscribed into the literature of "the uncanny". A myriad of elements could be readily adduced instantaneously, yet, my foray into the realm of "the uncanny" will initiate with the concept of death. Death is written all over the novel as well as beheld all throughout the film. It ranges from an individual officer, strangled to death by a pair of handcuffs, to a naively trusting driver, whose forehead gets blown away by the cattle gun, to a massacre in the middle of desert. What, however, renders all this spectrum of "the uncanny" is that a number of these deaths come at the hand of an uncanny cattle gun. It is worth noting how countless critics have inadvertently turned to the word uncanny in addressing this killing apparatus without even alluding to the literary or psychological implications, nor could they have been even aware of the concept, in the first place. Apart from this uncanny device, the narrative, is, in effect, seething with death, blood and violence.

Perhaps the uncanniest death-centered scene of the narrative is the very outset of the narrative unfolding how Moss walks into the crime scene, or massacre scene preferably, where an alleged drug deal seemed to have gone awry. Nothing but McCarthy's words can capture the severity of the uncanny air of this scene:

> In the first vehicle there was a man slumped dead over the wheel. Beyond were two more bodies lying in the gaunt yellow grass. Dried blood black on the ground. He stopped and listened. Nothing. The drone of flies. He walked around the end of the

> truck. There was a large dead dog there of the kind he'd seen crossing the floodplain. The dog was gutshot. Beyond that was a third body lying face down. He looked through the window at the man in the truck. He was shot through the head. Blood everywhere. He walked on to the second vehicle but it was empty. He walked out to where the third body lay. There was a shotgun in the grass. The shotgun had a short barrel and it was fitted with a pistol stock and a twenty round drum magazine. He nudged the man's boot with his toe and studied the low surrounding hills. (10)

To all the textual nuances of McCarthy's description comes another innovative addition by the brothers, namely silence, with which the uncanny state of the scene is fortified beyond one's ken. The silence of the sequence juxtaposed with Moss's slow paces incorporated into relatively long takes, which exhibit the corpses and particularly a vexing shot of a blood-soaked corpse whose eyes were left uncannily unshut, augments the intense density of the scene (see appendix: figures 10-12).

On an auditory note, nothing is heard but the sound of Moss's footsteps, wind and flies feeding on the corpses. That the brothers opt for some particular long takes and the lingering of the camera should be indicative of allowing the viewer to pause and take in the intended devastation. This inherent slowness is meant to reinforce the power of silence through which the uncanny state is consequently amplified. In Semenza's words, "[d]espite being a thriller, most of *No Country for Old Men* is rather static" (26). The brothers, to underline this uncanny state of silence, prefer to forego the pleasure of entertaining their audience with music.

I find it opportune to shed some quick light on the Coen brothers' avoidance of music in this picture. Having scored most of the brothers' pictures, Burwell boldly declares too much music is due to "either lack of confidence on the part of filmmakers or a tradition of scoring things" (qtd in Krossner 8). The silence aims at augmenting the tension, heightening the drama and making the viewer feel uncomfortable, which are all implicitly in line with the aesthetics of "the uncanny", as noted by Krossner:

> Not only is there very little music, but the characters themselves often remain silent for long stretches of time, thus forcing the audience to listen to either ambient sounds in the environment, or nothing at all. The audience thus receives few (if any) aural clues for plot development, which makes any event that much more surprising when it occurs. Silence heightens the drama by making the audience feel

> uncomfortable and by taking away a safety net for the audience, in that music makes the movie feel more artificial, less like reality. (9)

Thus, it is through an amalgamation of the silence embedded in the scenes and the characters that the visual aesthetics of the Coen brothers intersect with the psychological and literary subtleties of the "the uncanny". In lieu of soundtrack, the brothers prefer to utilize the environmental diegetic sounds, as Krossner puts it:

> The idea was to use diegetic sounds as much as possible, especially those that sound like they emanated from the environment; this meant that vocal or instrumental sources are kept to a minimum due to their clear musical associations. The sounds heard during the movie are drones of various sorts, many coming from extra-diegetic Buddhist singing bowls and the sound of air streams from the compressed air gun used by the psychotic Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem). The rest of the sound comes from diegetic traffic, crickets, and air ducts. (9)

An apt complement to this organized diegetic instrument-free silent uncanniness is the innate slowness with which the brothers trim their visual craftsmanship, as a trademark of their static style specifically in *No Country for Old Men*, as Semenza puts forth "the frequently static cinematography and mise en scèéne of *No Country for Old Men* is bolstered by the silence that often accompanies it" (37). This static uncanny slowness is not something the brothers had never ventured into in their previous oeuvre. This had been one of their oft-used stylistics in *Fargo* (1996) and *True Grit* (2010). Holistically viewed, the uncanny bloodshed scene at the very outset of *No Country for Old Men* seems to benefit as much from the death fright as the very silence within context of which this fright lies. Bereft of the accompaniment of music, the scene makes the viewer discern the non-entertaining and highly dramatic tone of the sequence, hence the ultimate uncanny sense. All the aforementioned auditory aesthetics, posits L. Beadling, are even at the service of a higher purpose, namely magnifying the role of voice and voice-overs, enhancing the realist atmosphere, and eventually deepening the narrative and thematic facets of the film (3).

Death and silence of this particular scene aside, Chigurh's spectral presence in "a web of predator and prey" (Peebles 168), is another salient feature of "the uncanny" which repeats itself

over and over traumatizing the characters in an unprecedented fashion. This repetitional facet of "the uncanny", Whitehead suggests, "mimics the effects of the trauma" (86), through alluding to the haunting and spectral returns to the traumatic experience. The repetitive nature of Chigurh's spectrality, his murderous acts and the shocking cattle gun should be how the effects of trauma in the narrative reach its frightening peak. This uncanny repetition wreaks further havoc on the psyche of the characters through some further abnormalities such as the cattle gun. As the very definition of the uncanny holds the role of the incidence of a familiar event at the heart of something unfamiliar accountable for the shaping of "the uncanny", my account of the cattle gun's uncanny role is further substantiated, as a familiar cattle gun is used to kill humans, which is completely unfamiliar and unprecedented.

The nuances by which this apparatus operates as a fetish at the hands of Chigurh instill further uncanny fright in the characters. McCarthy's thoroughgoing depiction of this apparatus, when he says "[t]he pneumatic hiss and click of the plunger sounded like a door closing", likens this device to a fetish at the hands of an automaton or a machine[32]. As Ellis contends, "[t]his attention to sound, and the fact that Chigurh wears this apparatus in a nearly cyborg fashion, recalls Frank Booth in *Blue Velvet*. It feels like a gimmick" (136). At the same time, Chigurh himself evinces some particular robot-like features, closer to the uncanny element of anthropomorphism[33], which puts him akin to the character of the Terminator in James Cameron's picture:

> The Coens seem to encourage associations with the iconic character of the sci-fi cyborg the Terminator─ the similarity between the two characters becomes apparent during the self-surgery scene, closely reminiscent of the analogous sequence in James Cameron's picture, when Chigurh, unlike ordinary mortals, fastidiously removes a bullet from his leg without feeling any pain. Both of them are indestructible killing machines, devoid of normal human emotions, that have come from parallel worlds to strike terror into the hearts of humans. (Ellis 75)

[32] "[A]utomatism" is another salient feature of "the uncanny" characterized in *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*: "[t]his is a term that can be used when what is human is perceived as merely mechanical: examples of this would be sleepwalking, epileptic fits, trance-states and madness" (Bennet and Royle 36). Chigurh's mechanical and emotionless motions converge very closely with the concept.

[33] Anthropomorphism refers to "the rhetorical figure that refers to a situation in which what is not human is given attributes of human form or shape: the legs of a table or the face of a cliff would be examples of anthropomorphism, though they might not immediately or necessarily provoke a feeling of uncanniness" (Bennet and Royle 36). However, the mingling of this is also uncanny, namely when a human is treated like a robot.

All these human-machine similitudes, together with the nuances of the automatism and anthropomorphism as the salient features of "the Uncanny" pave the way towards the hermeneutics of "the uncanny". Moreover, this uncanny behavior is more repetitive than death itself. At times, we do not clearly witness the death scene, yet the brothers do not miss out on the hissing or the plunging sound. More at play is how this cattle gun is exploited calmly to punch a hole on the forehead of its victims with his operator having a sadistic smile shape on his face uttering: "Would you hold still please, Sir?" (see appendix: figure 13).

This psychopathic and uncannily emotionless killing pattern can only be matched by the character of Judge Holden in McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*. Portrayed as a child molester and a rapist, "the Judge is devoid of pity, affection, and morality" (Hüseyin Altındiş 95), while he is otherwise "a well-educated, charismatic, and compelling character" (95)[34]. The same "striking duality and ambiguity" (Ligor 5) holds true in Chigurh's case, for he is fond of engaging his victims in philosophical dialogues and explicating his absurd principles prior to punching dehumanizing holes on their foreheads or shooting them. This duality and its recurrence all throughout the narrative, which is indicative of a bipolarity and severe mania, adds to the uncanny "manifestation of insanity"[35] in the character.

What instills a further morbid sense of "the uncanny" in this repetitive insane killing drive attendant upon Chigurh's robotic psyche, thereby severely traumatizing the characters and audience alike, is how inimical every character's condition is to the imminent death-driven traumas of Chigurh. In other words, barely can one escape the tragic fate, to which Chigurh finds himself committed and at whose hands he pretends to operate, Chigurh will plague them with. One should be reminiscent of Whitehead's words asserting, "[t]he uncanny is a source of dread because it acts as a mode of involuntary repetition and forces upon us the idea of something fateful and inescapable" (128). Chigurh fatefully kills anybody he lays his eyes on, sparing only the very few

[34] Instancing Judge Holden as McCarthy's most philosophical character, Frye, in "Histories, Novels, Ideas: Cormac McCarthy and the Art of Philosophy", enquires into the most important philosophical streams with which most his literary works are imbued, including but not limited to: "the ancient Gnosticism of the first-century Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions, Platonism and Neo-Platonism, Nietzschean materialism, and existential Christianity" (5).
[35] Cf. *The Uncanny* which is the first book-length analysis of the concept of "the uncanny" written by Nicholas Royle. The book includes a chapter titled "Manifestation of Insanity", in which Royle writes a great deal on the implications of insanity and the uncanny effects thereof.

lives of the people who beat the odds against pure coincidence[36] or the luck of the coin. Thus, it is either the fateful death or the coincidental victory, both of which fit the profile of "the uncanny". The most coincidental sparing in the narrative happened to the lucky station man who was verbally and intellectually challenged by Chigurh:

> Chigurh uncovered the coin. He turned his arm slightly for the man to see. Well done, he said.
> He picked the coin from his wrist and handed it across.
>
> What do I want with that?
>
> Take it. It's your lucky coin. (30)

The uncanny fateful/coincident toss of the coin tends to recurrently traumatize the psyches of the characters as gravely as the omnipotent spectral presence of the Chigurh does. It is as if Chigurh, the coin, and the cattle gun are everywhere and nowhere. More like a phantom, he is there a moment and quickly gone the next. This should remind us of the "surreal nature" of death put forth by Royle, which I detailed in the first chapter. Omnipotently witnessed everywhere, Chigurh remains an unknown figure all the same, as nobody who has seen him stays long enough to utter a word about where he is or what he looks like. Indeed, the characters know he exists in person through the atrocities he leaves behind, yet he does not exist to many as he constantly vanishes. He is as surreal as death itself. At the risk of sounding repetitive, I shall return to Royle's words once more: "[w]e might try to elucidate the death drive's capacity to be everywhere and nowhere in terms of what is called surrealism" (97). Among all the surreal disappearances of Chigurh, as the emblem of death along the narrative, the uncanniest one should be in the most haunting encounter between Moss and Chigurh at the hotel shoot-out.

Having wounded Moss, he was in his final pursuit to make the kill, only to find himself ambushed and shot at four times by Moss. This was the closest Moss got to killing Chigurh. Approaching the point where he thought to have killed Chigurh, he was only disillusioned by the uncanny and surreal disappearance of Chigurh into the darkness. The only thing this vanishing had

[36] "Odd Coincidences" are, according to the lights of Bennet and Royle, another staple of "the uncanny" aesthetics: "[o]dd coincidences and, more generally, the sense that things are *fated* to happen. Something might happen, for example, that seems 'too good to be true'" (36). Within the context of *No Country for Old Men*, the oddest uncanny coincidence could be explored in the shocking car crash, too good to be true, happening and severely injuring Chigurh.

left behind was the blood trail which Moss followed to darkness. One could wonder how a severely wounded Chigurh could vanish into nothingness in a matter of seconds. Both the pursuit and the disappearance are imbued with a heavy sense of surreal uncanny spectrality, which is portrayed with utmost visual tact and care by the Coen brothers. Some seconds prior to the ambush, the stylistics of Chigurh's placid steps, not having batted a single eyelid after all the shooting, were portrayed to the best of spectral aesthetics, namely the dark dim ghostly figure approaching Moss. Last but not least, even some seconds prior to Chigurh's pursuit, the shots aimed at the driver of the car and the rear windows were deeply uncanny as the viewer could see the shots yet not have the faintest clue where they were coming from. All such images coupled with the eventual surreal vanishing leave Moss as well as the audience aghast (see appendix: figures 14-18).

All this spectrally uncanny and surreal account in the Coen brothers' visual innovations, starting with Chigurh's ominous pursuit of Moss and ending in his surreal vanishing, seems to derive its original thread from no more than a paragraph in the book:

> He loped wincing down the sidewalk past the Aztec Theatre. As he passed the little round ticket kiosk all the glass fell out of it. He never even heard that shot. He spun with the shotgun and thumbed back the hammer and fired. The buckshot rattled off the second storey balustrade and took the glass out of some of the windows. When he turned again a car coming down Main Street picked him up in the lights and slowed and then speeded up again. He turned up Adams Street and the car skidded sideways through the intersection in a cloud of rubbersmoke and stopped. The engine had died and the driver was trying to start it. Moss turned with his back to the brick wall of the building. Two men had come from the car and were crossing the street on foot at a run. One of them opened fire with a small caliber machinegun and he fired at them twice with the shotgun and then loped on with the warm blood seeping into his crotch. In the street he heard the car start up again. (57)

Closely inspected, neither the ominous ghostly images of Chigurh's foot approach towards Moss nor the surreal vanishing of Chigurh to the darkness belong to McCarthy's pen in this excerpt, not to mention the omission of the two men crossing the street and firing at a run. The Coen brothers' account, to a large extent, diverges from McCarthy's text, in that they trim their visuality with further uncanny aesthetics such as the ghostly walk, silence, repetitive shootings (compared to the literary source), death of an additional driver while gurgling blood, and eventually the surreal disappearance of Chigurh. All this spectrum of uncanny staples utilized by the Coen brothers in this particular sequence transcend the text's uncanny nature to its imaginable apex. The suspense and macabre fear affiliated with uncanny links such as "silence, compulsive repetition [of death]

and the urge to die, solitude, the demonic and diabolical and ghostly ubiquity" (Royle 99) are some of the elegant uncanny links the brothers have employed not only in this particular sequence but also all throughout the narrative.

Epilogue: A Promising Ethical Moss and a Mortal Chigurh

Can the onslaught of all this new evil's phenomenal traumatization and its uncanny haunting be worked-through? Could one find a frail strand of positivity or a pale beacon of hope in the midst of the havoc the "prophet of destruction" wreaks upon the people of this narrative and the people reading or viewing this narrative? Will things in our future civilization go as awry as what the narrative and the themes thereof offered? And eventually should humanity succumb to the superiority of any evil rising above them and fall on the nihilist trajectory of defeat and distance themselves from the altruistic ethics and morality in much the same way as Bell did? These are some of the queries that might spark any concerned thinker's curiosity. Bell, the voice of McCarthy, should not think of an easy affirmative yes to the above-raised questions. A survey of ethical encounters in *No Country for Old Men* reveals that there is more to the traumatized ethics than meets the eye. The narrative is, with McCarthy's intention or otherwise, deeply imbued with a myriad ethical moments whose existence might bode well to any thought stream seeking hope, altruism, and moral obligation, which all lean against the very irreversible negativities of trauma. In the lines yet to come, I will explore how the deeds of Moss are tangential to the ethical circles of the narrative.

I have not delved into the character of Moss in detail so far in this study only to keep him intact for this occasion. As a protagonist who loses his integrity and logic to the seductive power of the money[37], Moss seems to be "searching for authenticity in the context of betrayal and moral

[37] In a lengthy essay titled "'You see, my wife's dad is real well off' – Money Obscured in the Coen Brothers", Fleming investigates the ambivalent role of money in three of the Coen brothers' films *Fargo, The Big Lebowski*, and *No country for Old Men*. Instancing *No Country for Old Men* as the most violent of all and consequently predicating this violence on the brutally seductive role of money, Fleming goes so far as to examine the motivation of Moss in taking all the risk to steal the money: "Despite Llewelyn's seemingly contented lifestyle, he jumps at the opportunity to experience upward mobility. As he is sending Carla Jean to her mom's, he reassures her that she is now retired. Llewelyn is not desperate for cash like *Fargo*'s Jerry. Instead, Llewelyn accepts the risk and the danger for the chance to transcend into an upper class that does not rely on work, and yet he only receives violence and death" (23).

hypocrisy" (McFarland 167). Traumatized by the bloodshed of the crime scene, he is resilient enough to look for the "last man standing" (12). In the process, he stumbles upon a dying man imploring him to give him some "Agua" or water, to which he responds: "I aint got no water" (10). Once he finds the "last man standing" or ironically the last man lying dead, he opens the case. At this moment, McCarthy elegantly describes his inner voice:

> It was level full of hundred dollar banknotes. They were in packets fastened with banktape stamped each with the denomination $10,000. He didnt know what it added up to but he had a pretty good idea. He sat there looking at it and then he closed the flap and sat with his head down. His whole life was sitting there in front of him. Day after day from dawn till dark until he was dead. All of it cooked down into forty pounds of paper in a satchel. (13)

This moment, I argue, was the very inception of his fall, even more fatal than how he missed the antelope. This moment gave rise to the very reason why the "prophet of destruction" was unleashed in the first place. Knowing a robotic destroyer is after him, he does not even bat an eyelid. On a phone call with Chigurh, he, in reaction to Chigurh's threatening words, bravely says: "I'm goin to bring you somethin all right, Moss said. I've decided to make you a special project of mine. You aint goin to have to look for me at all" (89). He even managed to hurt the so-called invincible or the immortal Chigurh in a gun fight, which seemed to be an epiphany to Chigurh: "[g]etting hurt changed me, he said. Changed my perspective. I've moved on, in a way. Some things have fallen into place that were not there before. I thought they were, but they weren't" (84).

Unlike Bell whose Second World War traumas have shriveled him down to an avatar of Caruthian incomprehensibility and defeat, Moss decided to grow, in tandem with the recent trauma model, out of his Vietnamese traumatic experience channelizing all those brutalities into intelligence, passion, stamina, discipline and military confidence. McFarland's description of Moss while hunting the antelope goes:

> The position of his body and the routine he goes through suggests, however, something other than recreational hunting. He lies on his stomach, apparently keeping himself hidden from the herd, and carefully judges distance and wind speed in preparation for taking a shot. He has the appearance of a sniper and the aura of a

> military veteran. And, indeed, later in the film we learn that he had served two tours of duty twelve years earlier in Vietnam. (168)

An overqualified war veteran who decided to hunt rather than weld, Moss seems to be a notch above a hypocrite who is consumed only by the power of money. He goes home to Carla and caches the case, yet the traumatic scene of the dying man asking for water haunts him. This is the ethical epiphany that strips him of his logic, prompting him to fill a jug of water and head back to the crime scene only to find him dead: "[t]he door of the Bronco was open. When he saw that he dropped to one knee. He set the water jug on the ground. You dumb-ass, he said. Here you are. Too dumb to live." (17). Traumatized initially by the horrid bloodshed of the crime scene, he is not afraid to return to the traumatizing scene as long as his return is the reason for the man's life. Knowing he was "fixin to go do somethin dumbern hell" (16), he never exposed himself to any misgivings or second thoughts about his ethical decision. Robison's words verify this ethicality further: "Moss' humanity cannot just let the man die. He gets up at 1:06 AM, and goes back out with intentions of bringing the dying man water…Moss returning to the scene was an act of compassion that his conscience could not allow him to avoid" (36).

Taking into account the fact that he saw the face of the man only once, yet he felt the moral obligation to return to the scene can only remind one of the Levinasion "face of the other", and how "alterity" is the very scope of the human capabilities in expressing their sympathetic behavior towards each other even at first sight. In a similar vein, Moss's ethical decision here should evoke the dicta of Onega and Ganteau underscoring the role of "risk-taking over noninvolvement" in the discourse of trauma. Moss decided to take action rather than passively feel indifferent to the demise of the face of the other, namely the moribund Mexican. This decision is analyzed efficiently in the words of McFarland: "[t]wo aspects of his decision are important. First, he does not base it on self-interest. And secondly, it is not conditional on the outcome. It is not a question of 'If I do not go, the Mexican will die,' but rather, 'If I do not go, I will not be able to live with myself'" (169).

Another encounter which closely ties Moss to the ethics of the narrative is when he establishes a platonic relationship, or friendship, with the hitchhiking lady. This fleeting bond, albeit short and doomed to end soon with the demise of both, seems to have secured its most significant place in the narrative (including approximately 15 pages), for it encompasses elegant descriptions of myriad terrestrial and celestial deeds such as eating, drinking, and engaging in

many philosophical[38] dialogues. Seeming to be seduced by the charismatic character of Moss upon many occasions, the lady offers herself several times, yet Moss is never tempted. Furthermore, he keeps his integrity to the inquisitive nature of the girl's questions telling him the truth regarding his marital status and his job as a welder. Equally generous and barely some hours past their friendship, he bestows the girls a thousand dollars to help her go to California:

> Then he reached in his pocket and took out the roll of hundreds and unfolded them. He counted out a thousand dollars onto the formica and pushed it toward her and put the roll back in his pocket. Let's go, he said.
> What's that for?
> To go to California on. (106)

Later, Moss trusts her with the car keys pretending to have left them on the table at the restaurant by which the girl herself is shocked uttering: "I could of just slipped off like I was goin to the ladies room and took your truck and left you settin there" (107). Aside from the money, he urges her to stop hitchhiking as it exposes her to strangers' sinister accompaniment: "[y]ou got money. You dont need to be out here hitchhiking" (111). All this Levinasion ethicality reaches its zenith once we know how Moss puts his life second to the girl's, when he put his gun down once he saw the Mexican's gun pointed at the girl: "[h]e says the Mexican started it. Says he drug the woman out of her room and the other man come out with a gun but when he seen the Mexican had a gun pointed at the woman's head he laid his own piece down. And whenever he done that the Mexican shoved the woman away and shot her and then turned and shot him" (113).

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[38] One of the renowned McCarthy quotes, "The point is there aint no point", came into being through a lengthy conversation between Moss and the hitchhiking lady. Evoking many literary philosophical schools such as absurdism and existentialism, the sentence, in the main, reflects the tenets of Nihilism where people and things are left with nothing but very little choice to change things or instill meaning in them:

> She looked at him. I guess I aint sure what the point is, she said.
> The point is there aint no point.
> No. I mean what you said. About knowin where you are.
> He looked at her. After a while he said: It's not about knowin where you are. It's about thinkin you got there without takin anything with you. Your notions about startin over. Or anybody's. You dont start over. That's what it's about. Ever step you take is forever. You cant make it go away. None of it. You understand what I'm sayin?
> I think so.
> I know you dont but let me try it one more time. You think when you wake up in the mornin yesterday dont count. But yesterday is all that does count. What else is there? Your life is made out of the days it's made out of. Nothin else. You might think you could run away and change your name and I dont know what all. Start over. And then one mornin you wake up and look at the ceilin and guess who's layin there?
> She nodded. (108)

McCarthy's ruminations favoring how one can never start over, run away, or change the yesterday in this conversation is elegantly consonant with the tenets of meaninglessness and futility of Nihilism.

He died trying to save a stranger's life, whose Levinasion face he had barely seen and for whom he could have felt no moral obligation. What shocked the witness and the reporting officers was how Moss did not give up even after he was fatally shot, thereby turning and shooting the Mexican: "[a]ccordin to this witness the old boy fell down the steps and then he picked up his gun again and shot the Mexican. Which I dont see how he done it. He was shot all to pieces. You can see the blood on the walkway yonder" (113). His ethicality seems to have pervaded and strengthened his physicality, hence not succumbing to defeat or death before witnessing the demise of the person who devalued his most cherished face.

In the Coen brothers' adaptation, all the ethical aesthetics comes down to a sunbathing lady flirting with Moss, to whom Moss shows the ring finger implying his marital status. Smiling at the proposition of the beer, Moss's conversation is immediately cut and is instead replaced with Sheriff Bell's arrival at the chaotic shooting of some Mexicans fleeing the scene, whose aftermath includes the floating body of the flirting lady in the pool, another Mexican bleeding and struggling with his life, and shot-to-death Moss (see appendix: figures 19-23). Many things are amiss here. The audience are left with their own subjective interpretation as to whether anything has happened between Moss and the propositioning lady, apropos which McFarland assumes that "[a]lthough the location of the bodies suggests that nothing did follow the beers, there is the impression that at the very least Llewelyn has let down his guard" (171).

Thus, the Levinasion ethicality Moss offers in the novel is replaced with a sort of moral failing in the film. All the intellectual dialogues, the financial help, the moral caring advice, the life sacrifice and the resilient reactionary shooting are replaced with a chaotic scene, whose existential and random absurdity should be that which the Coen brothers aim at, resembling the accidental and situational violence in *Lady Killers* or the absurdist violence in *The Man who Wasn't There*. Perhaps this is the Coen brothers' way of showing how the villain escapes and the protagonist falls, which pits itself against McCarthy's characterization of Moss.

By choosing to keep the audience in the dark and not revealing the details of Moss's death, the Coen brothers, I should suggest, opt for their exclusive creativity in urging the audience not only to resist judgement but also venture to the very random existential chaos by which a protagonist's thematically ambitious journey is abruptly obstructed. The audience, aghast and clueless, have to only rely on their subjective interpretations, which could not lead to the ethics this study pursued. To the brothers, at this point, what matters is the subversion of not only the

long-standing cliché of the protagonist's lofty journey to eliminate the evil but also the hero's noble and courageous death. This must be why the flaw of character development has been attributed to the brothers in the first place, as Adams states:

> These absences seem to consist of gaps in character credibility and the unceremonious elimination of Moss without the dignity of a proper death scene. Stephen Hunter was completely unimpressed, admitting bluntly, 'I just don't like it much', although like many he praised the film for its flawless cinematic craftsmanship. Hunter's main complaint concerned character development, of which he thought there was very little. (165)

Character development has never been one of the Coen brothers' pivotal concerns and I must assume, to this critical review, they might say they need their characters, or their heroes, as imperfect, mediocre and flawed as possible. After all, the brothers have always been iconoclasts of an unparalleled type, as Semenza's assertion verifies this as well:

> A typical Hollywood thriller would likely show a climactic showdown between Moss and Chigurh, with a slow-motion shot of Moss dramatically dying as his foe bests him. The movie would probably then end at this point, with a brief epilogue showing how Moss' wife, Carla Jean, copes with the death of her husband. But the Coens instead cut this scene out, and allow Chigurh to continue on his rampage. (32)

Moss's death, whether in McCarthy's ethically brave account or in the brothers' idiosyncratic visuals, leaves the "prophet of destruction" more prone to victory, invincibility and further brutal liberty. No one will stand in the robot's way and he will thrive to the best of his malice. McCarthy does not think so. Having tossed the coin to Carla's death and watched the soles of his shoes lest they would be smeared by her blood, he drives away reveling in his new psychopathic victory only to be disillusioned by an abrupt startling accident. He has waited all this while to lose his narcissistic invincibility only to a random idiotic crash. A chink in his armor is found. He is not immortal after all. Paying the young witnesses a hundred dollars for their shirt as a sling as well

as their silence, he limps away with a bone sticking out of his hand and a cut on his head. The same randomness whose power he covets and abides by disempowers him, leaving him perhaps edified for a second time after the first epiphany wound inflicted on him by Moss. This is where McCarthy might intend to instill a beacon of hope in the hearts of the traumatized victims implying that nemesis could be as random as fate, as Robinson aptly states: "Chigurh learns the hard way that he is not as powerful as he believed. It turns out that he is subject to the forces of nature that he thought he could control…Randomness is not a force that any human will ever control, and although Chigurh dedicates his existence to such a futile concept, even one with his persistence fails in the end" (40).

All the while Chigurh was tormenting Carla, the accident had been waiting to happen. Perhaps, when he decided to toss the coin to Carla's death, the drivers of the car who smashed into his car and consequently his ribs had already drawn the lines of Chigurh's fate; the lines, which, in his assumption, can be barely erased. These lines, however, were drawn for justice, this time. In the words of Gilmore, "the accident suggests that justice may eventually assert itself into human affairs" (174). Even if we lose sight of justice, randomness, nemesis, and fate, we can never turn a blind eye on the fact that we can be traumatized the same way we traumatize. One might try to find a thousand ways to dismiss any principle as invalid, yet one can never dismiss the power of trauma so. Chigurh or any other monster, they need to learn they might, if not must, get inflicted by the same traumatizing wound they inflict on others. This, then, can be an outlook to be appreciated by both parties involved.

Chapter Three – *The Road*: From Trauma to Ashes

> "No lists of things to be done. The day providential to itself. The hour. There is no later. This is later. All things of grace and beauty such that one holds them to one's heart have a common provenance in pain. Their birth in grief and ashes. So, he whispered to the sleeping boy. I have you."
>
> – McCarthy, *The Road*

McCarthy's wasteland in *The Road* is but a brave epitome of nothingness and void. Everything comes to naught. Ash is all there is. Barely could a shimmer of hope shine upon the drained hearts of the survivors of the apocalypse whose genuine nature no one is entitled to know or inquire into. The underlying traumatic event is hard to single out. Indeed, one could dare to claim that trauma makes very little sense as all one witnesses is but the post-traumatic era whose effect confuses the cause. To fortify the aesthetics of his thematic message, McCarthy has even annihilated his methodic traumatic characters. Chigurh and Holden are no more, or perhaps they have lost their lives to the unmentioned cataclysmic event. No Indians to scalp, nor any cattle gun to punch a hole to the foreheads. Cattle gun and the fetishes of *No Country for Old Men* might be, on an ironic note, among the things the father (Viggo Mortensen) and son (Kodi Smit-McPhee) would be nostalgically searching for. The void overshadows the plot as well, for the soul of narrative hinges upon the survival pursuit of a father and son scavenging for food and clothes. Nothing but.

All the hallmarks of civilization such as states, cities, books, machinery, socio-intellectual codes of conduct, intra-personal and inter-personal dynamics, families, affection, mercy, ethics, and many others, whose mention seems to be outside the scope of this study, have ceased to exist. The whole world is at the mercy of "Second Law of Thermodynamics…meaning that all energy will in time disperse and fizzle out" (Graulund 60). The only token of civilization standing strong is the road which might not linger on for long:

> But the roads are still there.
> Yes. For a while.
> How long a while?
> I dont know. Maybe quite a while. There's nothing to uproot them so they should be okay for a while. (McCarthy 18)

The road and its temporarily evanescent promises will not stave off the insufferable inhumanities at whose heart stands cannibalism. Cannibalism, as dehumanizing as it sounds, seems to surpass,

in profundity and rigor, all the rest of the traumatic tropes of the narrative. The apocalypse and the ashen world as the collective trauma plane of the narrative mesh with the individual trauma plane of the narrative such as the suicide of the mother, terminal illness of the father, and the abject survival efforts of the pair. Nonetheless, the resultant traumatic weight is diminutive compared to that of such lines concerning cannibalism: "Oh Papa, he said. He turned and looked again. What the boy had seen was a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit. He bent and picked the boy up and started for the road with him, holding him close. I'm sorry, he whispered. I'm sorry" (74). Traumatized from every conceivable angle, father and son still aspire to go South, in the hopes of finding hope. They are the "good guys" who will never stop "carrying the fire".

Non-Referential Temporality

Cauterized by a cataclysmic event, a nuclear disaster as the best hunch, the world has shriveled to solely a road on which the fire-carrying pair are treading. McCarthy offers very few clues as to the very underlying cause of this vast destruction. Yet, in the light of the phrase "[a] long shear of light and then a series of low concussions" (McCarthy 21), insinuations such as "[a] global weapon, a nuclear meltdown or an asteroid" (Peters 86), or an ecological disaster rush to mind as the most plausible cases. Very little, likewise, is uttered regarding the temporal state in which the narrative unfolds. Put differently, time and space have met their demise in much the same way the majority of world's population are lumbering towards their gradual death, as Graulund asserts: "[a]s with place, so with time, for though history is still present in *The Road*, it is only as a fading memory. It is not a totally static world, yet it is one that obviously soon will be, a world in which time has stopped and a world in which progress and evolution are no longer to be found" (60).

History of a traumatized/traumatizing narrative is essentially inaccessible. To return to the arguments of non-referential nature of trauma delineated in chapter one, historical truth or the true history is in an untenable state. Taking her cue from *Moses and Monotheism* and the shameful slaying of Moses, which gives rise to a traumatically and chronologically distorted history, Caruth claims, "[f]or history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (18). In other words, the traumatic history is not

only non-referential but completely tangential to an area of fiction, imagination and perhaps distortion.

Within the context of *The Road*, the more the audience focus on gleaning something from the temporal, or the historical, plane of the narrative, the more this plane beats them. Nobody could even venture a guess as to whether where, when and how the original trauma or the apocalypse has occurred, much less the temporal details of the event. All we are entitled to know is "[t]he clocks stopped at 1:17" (McCarthy 21). The rest of the interpretation rests on the shoulders of the audience, hence the above-mentioned fictitious area in which all these interpretations apropos the reality of the traumatic event readily distort the reality of the traumatic event. In other words, the audience, each with a different figment of imagination, conjure up their own version of the event which gave rise to the post-traumatic trajectory in *The Road*, hence the ubiquity of the non-referentiality.

This non-referentiality lies on the same plane on which past and present converge to and diverge from each other. This way the historical memory or the factual history is replaced with distorted fiction or the traumatic repression. Repressed to the unconscious of the characters or the audience, not much of this temporality can be uttered only perhaps to be revealed by later generations, when the genuine authenticity of the event has already transformed into legends. This must be precisely why the characters, with the astute intention of the McCarthy, do not or perhaps cannot reveal any clue as to the historical references or the facts around which the apocalypse occurred. This annihilated sense of temporality and its ensuing non-referential history are best noted in the words of Rambo:

> The quest that McCarthy sends us on in *The Road* is one in which temporal markers of past, present, and future no longer hold. At the beginning of the novel, the man wakes up in the night, and we are immediately told that there is no distinction between night and day. All, it seems, is an eternal middle; there is nothing to anticipate, and the past is what haunts the father, reminding him of a world he can never get back. McCarthy catches the reader in a schizophrenic, and distinctively American, postapocalyptic crisis of meaning. (101)

The lost temporality, which in turn gives rise to the non-referentiality of the traumatic event, informs much of the plot and characters as well. Not being able to make sense of the trauma, the characters offer very little regarding what happened, and even if they do, their accounts, according to the lights of Caruth, cannot be reliable, hence the non-referentiality. What adds to this non-referentiality is how the leading characters themselves are deprived of any name. This must be McCarthy's witting nuance in trimming the characters with the same referential vagueness which has likewise grown around the traumatic event itself. This non-referentiality is explicated in the words of Stifflemire:

> Additional referential ambiguity is created through the language which identifies the father and the son. By remaining nameless, the characters, like the states, lack unique identification. The lack of unique identifiers also means that they are both inevitably referred to by masculine pronouns, and by nature of McCarthy's style, the narrative does not clearly demarcate shifts of focus between the father and the son from paragraph to paragraph. (197)

This ambiguity has pervaded the soul of McCarthy's plot structure in much the same way his ashen scabland has infected everything and everybody it has come in contact with. Precisely and objectively viewed, there is no plot or element of an ideal storytelling, as Lincoln holds "[t]here are no chapter reliefs for 241 pages, no plot line or story arc of character development, just two shrouded figures walking the road and running for their lives, dark figures on a darkling plain" (165). Bereft of any structured plot and sensible characters, the narrative has to only hinge upon an amalgamation of an absent past and an uncertain future, which, in turn, intensifies the nature of the vague temporality, not to mention the already lost sense of spatiality, which is clarified in the words of Stifflemire:

> Temporal ambiguity in McCarthy's novel disconnects the past from its meaning—the past has become an absent referent—and the synchronic world of *The Road* offers only offers uncertainty in the future. In addition to such disruption of the meaningful connections between past, present, and future, the postmodern interest in questioning, undercutting, and eliding referents from their signifiers is

> manifested in other ways in the novel—including ambiguity of space, character identification, and artifacts of the lost world. While time has lost its markers, spatial demarcation has also become meaningless. (197)

Turning to the film, one can assert that at the heart of Hillcoat's visual aesthetics resides the very same traumatic non-referentiality, which is couched in delicate articulation and layering. Having excelled at directing a poetic and violent *The Proposition* (2005), Hillcoat's artistic ambition ventured into an apocalyptic realm with *The Road*, whose critical output oscillated between two stark camps whose members either called the film an "extremely faithful, disturbing but deeply moving adaptation" (Roddick qtd in McSweeney 43) or "a long, dull slog" (Hoberman qtd in McSweeney 43) that fell "dispiritingly short on every front" (T. McCarthy qtd in McSweeney 43).

Critically ambivalent and financially lackluster, the film, however, garnered great proponents as well. It is not the intention of this study, however, to examine the aesthetics of inter-disciplinary fidelity or discussions belonging to that category, insofar as each work lives its autonomous life within its pertinent medium. Nor is this study bent on judging the claims made apropos the merit or demerits of the filmic adaptation compared to its literary source. Instead, this study sets out to unravel the critical moments of the narrative, shared by both works, which run the hermeneutics of trauma or the traumatic moments to the best of their abilities. One such critical plane of which both the novel and film seem to be appreciative is non-referentiality or how this concept operates within the logic of both.

The film *The Road* abides by the tropes of non-referentiality in many fronts. All throughout the film, one cannot witness or hear a particular name, date, or place. No geographical or historical reference is made whatsoever, save for the symbolic "south" whose details are as ambivalent as the apocalypse itself. This non-referential plane is more visually trimmed by Hillcoat's choice of gray color aesthetics, as touched upon by Mcsweeney:

> It is perhaps the color of the film, or the lack of it, that becomes the defining aspect of its mise-en-scène. The overall effect of the bleached palette is one of decay: the world of *The Road* is dying—abandoned skyscrapers are crumbling, discarded ATM machines spill once revered but now useless cash on the floor, machines are rusted and broken, and abandoned vehicles litter the landscape like carcasses. (46)

Lack of color, I argue, strikes a close chord with the lack of temporality and space, as colors have constantly been referred to as agents which imbue differentiation and meaning to things and object. Low-key gray is all one can lay eyes on, except for the pre-apocalyptic moments, to which I will revert later.

Against this non-referentiality pits Hillcoat's eccentric choice of space, which, I argue, is utterly at adds with McCarthy's non-referential ideals. And this should be where Hillcoat's portrayal of trauma diverges from McCarthy's textual aesthetics apropos the concept of temporal ambiguity. While McCarthy has gone to great lengths to keep most his narrative as non-referential as possible, Hillcoat, on the contrary, believes he had to refer to particularly real places to instill the same awe in the film which was instilled in himself by the book, hence his choice of real places.

Calling it "heightened realism", Hillcoat succeeded in bringing into life an atmosphere of believability, as he personally notes: "[w]hat's moving and shocking about McCarthy's book is that it's so believable. So what we wanted is a kind of heightened realism, as opposed to the *Mad Max* thing, which is all about high concept and spectacle. We're trying to avoid the clichés of apocalypse and make this more like a natural disaster" (qtd. in Mcsweeney 46). Hillcoat, to render things more real, includes a footage of destruction of World Trade Center and the marooned ships after Hurricane Catrina (see appendix: figures 1-2). But, are these not pure references to time and places? Something which McCarthy himself has remained mysteriously silent on, which runs in tandem with the principles of the traumatic non-referentiality. Hillcoat's heightened reality, albeit plausible and appealing in visual terms, runs counter to the trauma discourse of non-referentiality.

Albeit at odds with the traumatic non-referentiality, Hillcoat's painstaking exploitation of "heightened reality" is not unfounded. Deliberately opting for "America's real apocalyptic zones" (Hillcoat qtd in Peebles 11) such as "abandoned stretches of freeway, deserted coalfields, a burned-down amusement park" (Peebles 11, see appendix: figures 3-5), not to mention the post-Katrina landscape and allusion to the Twin Towers' destruction, Hillcoat aims somewhere beneath the surface of the narrative, which, I wish to argue, could serve as his innovative directorial trademark. Perhaps, Hillcoat, as a personal mission of his own, attempts to make the non-referential referential, in order to make his foray into transforming McCarthy's fiction into reality. Trauma, Hillcoat should imply, has already happened and we can refer to it historically and geographically whatsoever, despite whatever the non-referentiality of a traumatic history might hold against it.

This stance is substantiated once we take into account his words when he comments "these places were not hard to find. There's a fair amount of devastation already in the American landscape" (qtd in Peebles 11).

Another visual traumatic staple whose portrayal is tangential to the non-referentiality trope and whose visualization is of remarkable significance is how McCarthy's underlying apocalyptic event escapes clear utterance. Solely allowing the reader to know when the clocks stopped, McCathy's tactful and non-referential maneuvers, henceforth, embark on their adventures abounding the whole narrative. The very pithy description of the night of the apocalypse is as follows:

> The clocks stopped at 1:17. A long shear of light and then a series of low concussions. He got up and went to the window. What is it? she said. He didnt answer. He went into the bathroom and threw the lightswitch but the power was already gone. A dull rose glow in the windowglass. He dropped to one knee and raised the lever to stop the tub and then turned on both taps as far as they would go. She was standing in the doorway in her nightwear, clutching the jamb, cradling her belly in one hand. What is it? she said. What is happening?
> I dont know.
> Why are you taking a bath?
> I'm not. (22)

The audience have their own wits to interpret the very reason why the man is running a bath at the time of an apocalypse, namely saving water before it turns to be a rarity in a post-apocalyptic era. McCarthy obscures the reason for this forward-looking act leaving it to the interpretive shoulders of his audience in much the same way he is hazy apropos the very apocalyptic event. He neither refers to the apocalypse nor the man's reaction to it, in an obtrusive way.

Hillcoat's directorial aesthetics abide by the same enigmatic haziness concerning the traumatic temporality. To add to the anxiety and the gravity of the moment, Hillcoat transposes the scene to a series of mad shouts and screams in the auditory background of the scene, which is more than noticeable. The complexion of the mother aghast in the face of such noise and the man's hasty bathtub filling are Hillcoat's way of visualizing or capturing the soul of the scene (see appendix: figures 6-7), as noted by Mcsweeney's description: "[a]s screams come from outside, a raging fire casts a crepuscular light that reflects on the heavily pregnant Woman's skin as she gazes in disbelief through the window" (48).

The director's camera, all the while, never strays away from the domestic space of the house. Put simply, outside is off-limits as it might reveal what it is not meant to be revealed. Trauma remains visually unreferred in much the same way it was not directly mentioned textually, as explicated in the words of Mcsweeney: "[y]et the camera never moves outside their house in the flashbacks (except for once much later in the film), and we never directly see or are told the nature of the event that caused the end of the world" (48).

This haziness, which conforms to McCarthy's equally vague and provocative narrational stylistics, brings up yet another trademark in Hillcoat's oeuvre, namely the challenge he poses to the audience in interpreting the scenes and sequences rather than simply providing the audience with the resolution: "[o]ne of the strengths of Hillcoat's film is its erotetic nature, a refusal to continuously explain and reaffirm the actions and motivations of the characters, a stark contrast to a Hollywood cinema characterized by its goal-oriented narratives of action and reaction" (48-49). Then, McCarthy's furtive non-referentiality and his provocative mysteries which overshadow the underlying traumatic event of the narrative sit well with Hillcoat's erotetic style and challenging interpretational expectations.

In the face of such irrefutable elusive temporality, what should, one might wonder, the narrative turn to? What could be the best alternative(s) to a plot and characters? One could not help but notice how McCarthy has his leading characters touch, wrap, unwrap, fix, unscrew, and perhaps use things or objects eventually. Things or objects are omnipotently felt all throughout the narrative in much the same manner as the lost temporality is pervasively sensed. Description of things is overwhelming as noted by Lincoln: "[a] scavenger hunt in an abandoned house dredges up a sugar-grape drink packet, a spoon, a boxcutter, a screwdriver. These things mean things, or will—the possibilities of tools, human ingenuity" (169). "Things" and their concreteness seem to be the only alternative to the subjectivity of a lost temporality, as held notably in the words of Hardwig:

> By imagining the unrealized and destroyed future, *The Road* reverses McCarthy's tendency to remove from his narrative the entanglement of modern objects. In this speculative novel, he swivels his orientation towards, rather than away from, cultural artifacts, towards 'things.' McCarthy's intense treatment of human- made things in *The Road*, the proliferation of his use of the term 'thing' in the novel, and

> the tender treatment of these things by the book's narrator, so different from McCarthy's desire to shed his narrative of frivolous objects of civilizations, can best be accounted for by thinking about the aesthetic choices he makes when imagining the future. (39)

McCarthy's narrative, privileged with the tangibility of "things" and their nostalgic aesthetics, signposts thematic trajectories by which the lack of all the clichés and archetypes could be accounted for. The objects of the past afford the narrative the same body of traumatic concreteness whose counterpart, namely the ambiguous temporality, equally lacks. The author details every single thing the fire-carrying pair get their hands on with as much precision as possible, while there is not even an iota of connotation or denotation of the time in which all these "things" and the descriptions thereof surface. On an ironic note, even if such descriptions did exist, once could doubt their reliability in the light of the non-referential nature of the trauma the whole world has been exposed to. Out of many thing-based descriptions in McCarthy's text, I have opted for a particular excerpt in which the father intends to uncap a gas can:

> On the top shelf were two cans of motor oil and he put the pistol in his belt and reached and got them and set them on the bench. They were very old, made of cardboard with metal endcaps. The oil had soaked through the cardboard but still they seemed full. He stepped back and looked out the door. The boy was sitting on the back steps of the house wrapped in the blankets watching him. When he turned he saw a gascan in the corner behind the door. He knew it couldnt have gas in it yet when he tilted it with his foot and let it fall back again there was a gentle slosh. He picked it up and carried it to the bench and tried to unscrew the cap but he could not. He got the pliers out of his coat pocket and extended the jaws and tried it. It would just fit and he twisted off the cap and laid it on the bench and sniffed the can. Rank odor. Years old. But it was gasoline and it would burn. He screwed the cap back on and put the pliers in his pocket. He looked around for some smaller container but there wasnt one. He shouldnt have thrown away the bottle. Check the house. (51)

Why should a canonical author like McCarthy take heed of how the leading character unscrews a gas can? In layman's eyes, all the countless descriptive instances of "things" and their tangible depictions, which are solely targeted at the aesthetics of the survival of the rummaging pair, would be tedious and redundant. And expectedly, many such critical views have been pervasively heard in the recent literary criticism. Yet, when the underlying reasoning of this thing-based substitution

is revealed, one could reverse this severe judgement. This particular dimension of fetishism in describing "things" is not only an approach to compensate for the lack of temporality but also a decent scheme to display the irreversible gravity of the traumatic loss and how the "things" of the past could not be retrieved under any circumstance, which is illuminated in the words of Hardwig again:

> In *The Road*, there are several moments during which things are endowed with such an aura that at first seems inexplicable in a novel written by McCarthy. Whether it is the still- standing gas pumps that remain in the ruined land (6) or the specter of a dam towering over polluted waters (19) or the child's bicycle, formica table, and Kool- Aid in an abandoned house (119), the remnants and memory of things become the book's way to reveal inexpressible loss. (45)

Flashbacks

Should "things" constitute half McCarthy's ashen narrative, flashbacks and dreams constitute the remaining half. Underscoring the sensory and emotional dimension of the flashback, Hustvedt believes flashbacks need to be preserved in a locus other than the linguistic repertoire of the victim's psyche (pars 5-6). Ironically, words are the body of the flashbacks in literature but not their soul, in that their mission is to lay bare the emotionality of traumatic encounter. In other words, words are instrumental in helping the victim revisit the traumatic image which has not been properly incorporated into the psychic memory of the patient. This way, the flashbacks coincidentally serve as the catalysts for the notorious purposes of the haunting agent. Briefly, the overwhelming traumatic encounter keeps haunting the victim via the repetitive raid of the flashbacks which reflect the emotional and sensory dynamics of the traumatic moment.

Within the context of *The Road*, flashbacks could be construed as the traumatic plane on which the leading characters converse with the pre-apocalyptic era. In other words, characters, through the indelible power and finesse of the flashbacks, enter into dialogues with the nostalgic past. This ubiquitous pervasion of dreams and flashback inform a substantial portion of the father's psychic malaise. Perhaps the most moving and emotional flashback, out of whose vortex he cannot think of a proper way, is the conversation which preceded the suicide of his wife:

> You're talking crazy.

> No, I'm speaking the truth. Sooner or later they will catch us and they will kill us. They will rape me. They'll rape him. They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you wont face it. You'd rather wait for it to happen. But I cant. I cant. She sat there smoking a slender length of dried grapevine as if it were some rare cheroot. Holding it with a certain elegance, her other hand across her knees where she'd drawn them up. She watched him across the small flame. We used to talk about death, she said. We dont any more. Why is that?
> I dont know. It's because it's here. There's nothing left to talk about.
> I wouldnt leave you.
> I dont care. It's meaningless. You can think of me as a faithless slut if you like. I've taken a new lover. He can give me what you cannot.
> Death is not a lover.
> Oh yes he is.
> Please dont do this.
> I'm sorry. (23)

Having left its heinous mark on the psyche of the father, the flashback is just a harbinger of all the saga of the dreams that flood over his wounded psyche. The suicide of his wife is the trauma whose compulsion[39] the father cannot wrench himself free of. It is as though the sensory or the emotional image of the suicide, as set forth by Hustvedt, is the only tale he has and the only tale he can never make sense of: "[i]n his dream she was sick and he cared for her. The dream bore the look of sacrifice but he thought differently. He did not take care of her and she died alone somewhere in the dark and there is no other dream nor other waking world and there is no other tale to tell" (McCarthy 14). The inconsolable weight of this trauma gives rise to the repetitive dreams by which the victim, father in this context, is irreversibly haunted. Flashbacks and the dreams thereof, within the context of *The Road*, are best explicated from Caruth's position when she asserts that flashbacks showcase "the absolute inability of the mind to avoid an unpleasurable event that has not been given psychic meaning" (59). As such, the father's soul has not gone through the Caruthian psychic meaning process, hence the frequent returns to the traumatic moment in order to come to terms with it.

Another excessively traumatizing thought which keeps possessing the psyche of the father is how he will bring himself to kill his son if they are caught by the cannibals, lest they rape, torture

[39] Even if the repetition compulsion of the apocalyptic world is worked-through in the light of the father's resilient psyche, the traumatic compulsion of his wife's suicide seems to be as Caruthianly incomprehensible as possible, hence the omnipresent state of flashback to the wife all throughout the novel. In other words, he seems to work thorough the apocalyptic trauma successfully striving to survive at any cost, while he still acts out when it comes to the death of the wife.

and eat him. All throughout the narrative, he is intensely preoccupied with this horrific thought and the scene of a trauma which has not even happened. This intensely feared trauma is revealed as McCarthy describes the dying moment of the father:

> I cant. I cant hold my son dead in my arms. I thought I could but I cant.
> You said you wouldnt ever leave me.
> I know. I'm sorry. You have my whole heart. You always did. You're the best guy. You always were. If I'm not here you can still talk to me. You can talk to me and I'll talk to you. You'll see. Will I hear you?
> Yes. You will. You have to make it like talk that you imagine. And you'll hear me. You have to practice. Just dont give up. Okay?
> Okay. (103)

The dilemma of choosing to euthanize his own son or otherwise allowing the cannibals to rape and eat him stands as close as possible to the traumatic suicide of his wife, as Peters remarks: "[b]ecause the Man invests so much significance in the Boy, the central drama of the story is whether he would be able to kill the child if necessary─ and in a world in which roving groups of cannibals roam the roads, it may well be necessary. With only one bullet left in his gun, the man constantly wonders if he would be able to kill his son to spare him worse pain" (91).

The nightmarish flashbacks take their toll on the psyche of the child as well. Traumatized by the loss of a mother and the world standing on the verge of annihilation, the boy is but broken beyond repair. Mired in his traumatic compulsion, he seems to have no way of being redeemed:

> It's okay, Papa. I just want to have a little quiet time.
> What about dreams? You used to tell me dreams sometimes.
> I dont want to talk about anything.
> Okay.
> I dont have good dreams anyway. They're always about something bad happening.
> You said that was okay because good dreams are not a good sign. Maybe. I dont know. (100)

All the haunting flashbacks, dreams, and nightmares address the very incomprehensibility of the traumatic event, either the suicide of the mother or the crumbling world, which are otherwise called the PTSD by Caruth, by which "overwhelming events of the past repeatedly possess, in intrusive images and thoughts, the one who has lived through them" (*Trauma, Explorations* 151). This "singular possession by the past", which touches upon the spectral haunting of the traumatic

experience, fits the bill here too, as the father and son seem to be incessantly possessed by the gravity of the traumas imposed on them.

However, there is no clear flashback or dream revolving around the apocalyptic event itself, which is because McCarthy constantly strives to obscure this particular event with a certain haze of uncertainty. As such, the traumatic event is missed and one witnesses only the signs. This "missed encounter" evokes the "Lacanian real" in which one can never ascertain the true shape of the traumatic event. The more one delves into the very core of this encounter, the more one finds out it is beyond the world of signification. Within the context of *The Road*, the audience, as traumatized by the crumbling world as the father and son, are craving a thread of knowledge as to what set in motion the very apocalypse whose aftermath is nothing but ash. Yet, the "*tuché*" or all the search for the cause and the "missed encounter" escapes them insidiously. To repeat myself, through Lacan's lens, "real" is not only traumatic but also un-assimilable, hence its being missed and mysteriously non-existent. The mysteriously non-existent nature of the traumatic even in *The Road*, efficiently meshes with the implication of the "Lacanian real".

Traumatic flashbacks and dreams of *The Road* plan their incursion into the realm of the technical aesthetics of the narrative as well. McCarthy has his characters scavenge for food one moment, and leads them towards a flashback to the suicide, the other. Paragraphs are short, characters are nameless, and the memories are alienating and intense. No particular line of narration, linear or non-linear, is pursued. All such stylistic amalgamation, this study should infer, aids not only the fragmentation of the narration but also the very non-referential nature of the narrative, as explicated in the words of Hardwig: "McCarthy presents the reader with clumps of memories, scenes, and events that seem almost random. Paragraphs are short and intense, like telegrams, and are separated, not by chapter titles or dividing symbols, but only by space" (43). Referring to the hypotheses of Whitehead regarding the fragmented narrative voice, Bueno, in like manner, attributes the narrative's haunted state to "the dreams, flashbacks, repetitions, and intrusive memories, which are proof of the fact that McCarthy drew his main characters as suffering victims of a traumatized psychological condition" (80).

Time is utterly titular in *The Road*. It is an agent with no authority nor meaning. This titular essence of temporality discommodes the memories of the characters who are in constant quest of reality or truth. However, encountering a "missed encounter", their memory, too, fails them, hence the unreliable or the non-referential state of their remembrance. To add to the gravity of the non-

referentiality, the flashbacks and dreams step in as they are what is left of their past. This argument seems to be validated by Butler when he mentions:

> Time, especially in *The Road*, becomes an increasingly arbitrary concept. The man 'hadnt [sic] kept a calendar for years', which raises questions about what happens to memory when time collapses and ceases to be important. 'The child would ask him questions about the world that for him was not even a memory' and the man tries to answer but recognises in doing so that if he tries to tell the 'truth', it will still be fiction because memory is unreliable, because 'there is no past'. The idea of 'reality' is also troubled by this, for if there is no past, no secure sense of time, then there is also no present. Dreams and memories intrude to the extent that the boundaries are blurred and nothing can be trusted. (7)

Even if the father had wished to enlighten his son and his inquisitiveness on the nature of the truth behind the ashen world, his traumatized, and consequently non-referential, memory would have failed him, the son and his query.

The visual world of Hillcoat has been more than attentive to the aesthetics of traumatic flashbacks. Yet, what haunts even the haunting body of the flashbacks is the sequential flashback to the wife (Charlize Theron) and the memories whose nostalgia pervades the psyche of the man. It is as if this flashback or the chain of flashbacks to the wife, in Hillcoat's logic, represent all the other traumas and their corresponding flashbacks. Hillcoat's flashbacks to the wife outnumber those portrayed by McCarthy, including scenes and sequences such as the birth of the baby, the suicide dialogue, the piano duet scene, her wandering off to the darkness and the concert and bed scenes. Some of these flashbacks (birth of the baby, the concert, the piano duet scene, and the car scene) are non-existent, or pale in comparison with those in McCarthy's novel (see appendix: figures 8-11). Other flashbacks and dreams such as the fishing trip, trout, and the family house, however, escape Hillcoat's adaptation, as noted in the words of Luce: "[t]he film's exclusive representation of memories of the wife and rejection of all the man's other memories suggest far more than the novel that the loss of her overshadows for him all other losses" (qtd in Peebles 13).

Despite an overarching presence, the wife does not exert as much an intellectual influence on the film as she does on the novel. Therefore, she is voluminous and numerically remarkable but

insignificant. McCarthy puts a lot of his soul into the character of the wife making her and her suicide look cogent and intellectually solid in various fronts: "[a]nd she was right. There was no argument. The hundred nights they'd sat up arguing the pros and cons of self destruction with the earnestness of philosophers chained to a madhouse wall" (23). In the film, however, the character solely represents what I call a blank trauma─ a lost entity whose loss is not imbued with anything more than a psychic malaise. Peebles duly expounds on this gap:

> McCarthy himself clearly considers the mother's character and actions significant and labels many pages of an early draft concerning her decision to commit suicide "The Mother." How and why she makes her choice are as important as its effects. In the film her decision is stripped of the bulk of that reasoning and rather appears as an inability to properly care for or about her family. (13)

One way to justify Hillcoat's stylistics in trimming the flashback of the wife could be how he emphasizes the role of haunting and its divorce from the intellectual or exegetic background it was once exposed to. Put simply, the director is more concerned with the traumatic awe of the haunting flashback than the intellectuality it can equally offer. Let us treasure his own words then:

> The flashbacks in the film will make memories feel more like a haunted dream, haunted by both the father's own ghosts and the ghosts of a collective American past. They will be subtly heightened to create a magical and eerily mournful quality. The most ordinary of things will be focused on . . . These dream memories will briefly undo the death that has been dealt but also in contrast, emphasize all that has been lost, especially the smallest of things we take for granted. (48)

Apart from intellectuality, the adaptational discrepancy also entails the ellipsis of McCarthy' dark comedy and existential despair, to which he frequently refers throughout the narrative: "[i]t is McCarthy's dark comedy that Hillcoat misses altogether, not that there's a lot of it, but it's there, and it functions the same way that comic interludes do in Shakespeare's tragedies. You gotta' give the audience a break. And while his style is utterly different, McCarthy on occasion evokes that Beckettian blend of verbal wit and utter existential despair" (Hawkins 57). The amalgamation of

this wit and despair is best seen in the words of Ely, "the parody of a prophet (Ely possibly short for Elijah?) or as a 'prophet' for the new, godless present ('There is no God and we are his prophets')" (57), whose role is masterfully played by Robert Duvall, the oracle-like omniscient looking seasoned man of the decaying world who has survived thus far not by coincidence. Duvall in the guise of Ely, the only name to be chosen for a character in the plot, wittily and darkly utters "[w]here men cant live gods fare no better" and "[b]eggars cant be choosers" in response to man's questions and sentences like "[w]hat if I said that he's a god" and "[o]r you might wish you'd never been born", respectively (64-65). While artfully shedding tears and exchanging deep conversations with the man, Duvall, or Penhall and Hillcoat at root, sadly miss out on such dark witty staples, which could be, partly suggested by this study, some of the most famed and significant philosophical dicta of McCarthy's text.

Another innovatively distinct thread of flashbacks employed by Hillcoat, whose essence can be only attributed to Penhall's screenplay rather than the novel, are the opening flashbacks of the film which nostalgically and traumatically run between the prelapsarian and postlapsarian moments. These preapocalyptic aesthetics, which are shot using vibrant and lively colors, mainly revolve around the wife's innocent beauty and the unblemished verdant nature, mainly trees and flowers here; the very same two things which, by their consequent loss, become the major traumas of the narrative for the man, and by extension all humanity, namely the wife and nature respectively (see appendix: figures 12-14). Hillcoat astutely and innovatively captures the soul of these two traumas right at the outset of his film via the use of touching flashbacks. A thorough account of these nostalgic images is presented in the words of Mcsweeney:

> Held close to the camera, the first shots of the film are of the natural world: the leaves and branches of a blossoming tree, bright and beautiful flowers. The colors are vibrant and alive, almost bursting from the screen. A close-up of a beautiful and unnamed Woman (Charlize Theron) lingers as she turns shyly away from the camera. A man tenderly strokes a fine chestnut-brown horse, the wedding ring prominent on his hand. The lighting is soft and otherworldly, giving the sequence a mystical, glowing aura that is considerably enhanced by the melancholy score composed by Nick Cave and Warren Ellis, softly lilting in the background alongside the diegetic sounds of nature. (47-48)

This flashback to the prelapsarian era lingers on to the bathtub scene, whose nuances have already been illuminated previously, and swiftly tethers itself to the postlapsarian era where a disillusioned traumatized man is lying next to a Godly messianic son, with no wife or the lush nature to be found anywhere. Mcsweeney's description offers the following:

> His face is contorted by the juxtaposition of his nostalgic dream world and the harshness of reality. …The Man is almost unrecognizable: gaunt and with a full beard and sunken eyes, he has aged a lifetime in the ten years that have passed; he looks like a concentration camp victim. As he looks out over the desolate landscape, dying forests creak, an icy wind rushes, and the ground quakes with huge groans. The bright colors of the flashbacks have been replaced by a bleached-out palette of browns and grays that will dominate the film's present. The boy wakes up and worriedly calls for his father. 'It's just another earthquake,' the Man says. 'I'm right here, right here.' The title of the film materializes: *The Road*. (49)

The once lush and green trees have fallen, the landscape has withered away, and the wife has joined them. All these were portrayed through the creative directorial arsenal of Hillcoat, namely flashbacks, in matters of seconds to the best of its visuality; the very same thing which might have taken McCarthy a hundred pages of painstaking efforts.

Furthermore, Hillcoat differentiates all the prelapsarian era from the postlapsarian era by means of color, in that all the prelapsarian scenes are shot in vibrant colorful photography whereas the postlapsarian scenes are shot in nothing but dark or gray color, to signify nothing but death. This dichotomy should instantly evoke the Torok's concept of split psyche and Baer's "twofold structural disjunction between an experience and its integration into narrative memory, understanding, and communicability" (10), save for the fact that what is split here is not the psyche of the victim, but the narrative. Thus, Hillcoat's split narrative with the grace of initial flashbacks of the film wavering between the preapocalyptic and postapocalyptic moments, aims at displaying the split psyche of the man.

An Apocalyptically Wounded Child

The traumatic themes of *The Road* reach their apogee in the character of the boy. Not having breathed any pre-apocalyptic air, the boy is a traumatized product of the apocalypse, yet he has an immaculate record of survival as most his likes have already perished. Grave times like an apocalypse do not but demand figures of hope, grace and grandeur, and the boy is all passion and hope incarnate. Wounded to his bones, he has not still lost his faith in the power of goodness, wondering all throughout the narrative if they are the "good guys."

Suffering from an unrelenting ordeal of motherlessness, he is also poignantly traumatized by a post-apocalyptic crumbling world which puts him on an abject trajectory of survival whose denouement, given the severity of his father's health condition, does not bode well. All the mentioned saga of traumas seems to be diminutive compared to an image of the traumatizing scenario, where he has lost his father, yet is imperatively obliged by him to euthanize himself by the only remaining bullet, lest he should be torturously raped and eaten by the marauding cannibal gangs.

Having gone through all such traumas and many others which are rapidly approaching him on their survival trajectory, he maintains his angelic integrity trying to be benevolently generous to even strangers and even thieves. All such features make him merit the title of a messiah or the word of God[40] (Hage 51-52) or the only "warrant" the father had: "[h]e knew only that the child was his warrant. He said: If he is not the word of God God never spoke" (McCarthy 3). Thus, the boy, to father and the audience, is the voice of God in a world which was "looted, ransacked, ravaged" (50).

One should never lose sight of the fact that messiah or God cannot be eleven years old and the boy is solely a child after all. Integral to my arguments of childhood trauma in chapter one was how the notions of self, self-image, and schema shatter owing to an early traumatic experience, as

[40] The concept of God has been more than controversial in McCarthy's canon. Yet, what, at root, characterizes his picture of God is what could be termed as pessimism or agnosticism. Shattering the traditional notions of God, McCarthy has constantly been bent on distancing his characters from such notions. However, one can never deny the ubiquitous presence of an almighty energy, God or otherwise, throughout his canon. This is duly noted in the words of Hage: "[n]evertheless, this has not prevented God from being a pervasive subject matter throughout McCarthy's novels, and the author's characters are typically great believers in an almighty entity—even in their heresy" (89). This paradox is readily visible in the character of the man in *The Road*, as, on the one hand, he curses the God uttering "[a]re you there? he whispered. Will I see you at the last? Have you a neck by which to throttle you? Have you a heart? Damn you eternally have you a soul? Oh God, he whispered. Oh God" (6), but on the other hand, he believes his son the "word of God".

Revier posits: "[i]f trauma is encountered during childhood at a time when schemas and beliefs about the self and world are forming, traumatic experience may interface with development of subordinate, general schemas that create a sense of continuity in self, memory and meaning" (37).

Consequently, the child will suffer from disrupted schema formation and dubious or distorted self-image; hence a shattered identity. Within the context of *The Road*, the deficient self-image and the shattered identity of the boy is manifestly detected upon many occasions, yet the most transparent case is how the boy lacks the very simple diagnostic verdict of telling the "good guys" from "bad guys". This missing diagnostic staple is rendered further significant once one takes into account the fact that the boy is not even aware of his own position as to whether or not he belongs to the good guys' camp. This body of uncertainty can only be accounted for through the lack of self-image and disrupted schema formation process. Frequenting most of the pages of the novel, the dubious question of being bad or good on the part of the boy, which is indicative of his shattered self-image as the result of the overwhelming traumas, seems to be one of pivotal concerns of McCarthy:

> He sat there cowled in the blanket. After a while he looked up. Are we still the good guys?
> He said.
> Yes. We're still the good guys.
> And we always will be.
> Yes. We always will be.
> Okay. (30-31)

This diagnostic lack is closely allied with another staple of childhood trauma, namely the inability to interpret the reality or make sense of it. As Reviere notes, the child will encounter a "disruption in the ability to interpret reality in terms of existing schemas, failing to build on a personal narrative and to develop a capacity for flexible adaptive action" (37). This inability in teasing out the truth or reality is all over the boy's character. Perhaps the most vivid feature of this concept is the naivety of the boy which made him trust anybody, thereby his insistence on helping the good and bad equally. The deficient reality sense in the traumatized child reveals itself when they are robbed of their food and supplies by a thief (Michael Kenneth Williams) whom is later caught by the father who demands not only the reclamation of the clothes but also a retribution. He asks him to remove his clothes to a point of total bareness and leaves him mercilessly. Relenting and rushing back to the scene a while later, the father finds out the thief is no more. Not being able to interpret the

reality of what the thief had done, the boy starts sobbing and opposes the biblical "eye-for-an-eye style" (Peebles 8) of father's revenge, imploring him to stop:

> I'm begging you.
> Papa, the boy said.
> Come on. Listen to the kid.
> You tried to kill us.
> I'm starving, man. You'd have done the same.
> You took everything.
> Come on, man. I'll die.
> I'm going to leave you the way you left us.
> Come on. I'm begging you.
> He pulled the cart back and swung it around and put the pistol on top and looked at the boy. Let's go, he said. And they set out along the road south, with the boy crying and looking back at the nude and slatlike creature standing there in the road shivering and hugging himself. Oh Papa, he sobbed.
> Stop it.
> I cant stop it. (95)

However, viewed differently, this reactionary sobbing could also be an indication of the boy's intact and compassionate soul. In the words of Peebles, "[t]father worries about their survival, but the boy worries about their morality, their goodness. 'I am the one,' he says, a Christlike statement that is appropriate considering his advocacy of mercy and forgiveness" (8). However, in the large scheme of things, mercy to an immoral thief in a post-apocalyptic world could again emanate from the lack of reality sense, objectively viewed.

Perhaps the most fatal wound to the psyche of the boy, which murdered his soul beyond redemption, was bearing witness to infanticide:

> He was standing there checking the perimeter when the boy turned and buried his face against him. He looked quickly to see what had happened. What is it? he said. What is it? The boy shook his head. Oh. Papa, he said. He turned and looked again. What the boy had seen was a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit. He bent and picked the boy up and started for the road with him, holding him close. I'm sorry, he whispered. I'm sorry. (74)

The outcome of this unspeakable malice inherent in the scene is nothing short of a psychic cul-de-sac, which, in turn, culminates in the child's total silence and shock. From an innovative position, Godbout argues that "the threat or representation of infanticide deployed in language can kick readers back to a state of silenced infancy, with a feeling of anxiety and fear as if one were abandoned to a violent and ancient postlapsarian, Hobbesian state of nature" (1). Instancing McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* and *The Road* as two seminal works grounded in the concept of infanticide, Godbout sheds some quick light on the infanticide scene asserting: "[t]he boy, traumatized by the sight, refuses to speak for a period after this incident. McCarthy capitalizes on this fear. These passages from McCarthy's novels present infanticide as obscenities, with the intent to shock the reader" (3). The child is not himself from now onwards. As McCarthy himself describes "He didnt know if he'd ever speak again" (74). This moment, once more, evokes the Lacanian real insomuch as the trauma is unassimilable and mysteriously muffled to the very unconscious of the child. In Caruthian parlance, he will be possessed and haunted by this encounter, and flashbacks and nightmares will replace his spoken language, hence Godbout's "anxious silence" (1).

The boy's adaptive measures fail him in much the same way the crumbling world fails his morality. As mentioned in chapter one, trauma, from the position of Reviere, "may affect adversely the ability of the child to make future assimilations and accommodations and thus may reduce cognitive and behavioral flexibility, impairing the child's ability for adaptation" (37). The boy's traumatized lack of adaptive skills, however, runs in favor of his sense of ethicality. In a world where people are not taken aback by infanticide or cannibalism, the boy can neither conform to the status quo nor neglect brutalities committed by the survivors of the apocalypse. Even the thought of becoming a cannibal or adapting himself to the new ruthless world, even if he is on the verge of death as a result of starvation, revolts him:

> No. Of course not.
> Even if we were starving?
> We're starving now.
> You said we werent.
> I said we werent dying. I didnt say we werent starving.
> But we wouldnt.
> No. We wouldnt.
> No matter what.
> No. No matter what.
> Because we're the good guys.

> Yes.
> And we're carrying the fire.
> And we're carrying the fire. Yes.
> Okay. (50)

The boy's lack of adaptation to the new world phenomena, this study suggests, instead transcends his ethical state, thereby making a prophetic messiah out of him in whom all his father's hope rests. The father is not the only person who is in the awe of the boy and his emblematic purity. To the middle of the novel, they run into an old man[41] (Robert Duvall) walking along the road, who "cant see good" (63). Taking up approximately fifteen pages of the narrative and involving the most thought-provoking dialogues apropos God and existence, this encounter, I argue, is the most transcendental encounter of the novel. Shocked by the sight of a child, the old man says:

> I've not seen a fire in a long time, that's all. I live like an animal. You dont want to know the things I've eaten. When I saw that boy I thought that I had died.
> You thought he was an angel?
> I didnt know what he was. I never thought to see a child again. I didnt know that would happen.
> What if I said that he's a god? (64)

Looking askance at the attitude of the father and his seemingly idiotic question, the old man, whose voice seems to be McCarthy's, replies: "[w]here men cant live gods fare no better. You'll see. It's better to be alone. So I hope that's not true what you said because to be on the road with the last god would be a terrible thing so I hope it's not true" (65). Thus, the old man's existential position regarding God diverges in great length from the sacred spiritual attitude of the father who invests so much significance in the boy as to call him God. Peters elaborates on this divergence:

> The Man doesn't view the Boy as a god in the sense that he has supernatural powers or an omnipresent aura. The Man's thinking is loosely existentialist. In a world where he is completely responsible for everything in life, the Man chooses the Boy as the entity through which he will make sense of things. Establishing a relationship

[41] As an omniscient oracle who utters the very words which befit an oracle, the old man is the only named character (Ely), whose name, once more, is food for thought, for Ely could probably stand for Eli or Elijah, the Hebrew bible prophet. This omniscience is substantiated through utterances like "I knew this was coming… This or something like it. I always believed in it" (64), which strikes a close chord with McCarthy's persona when he later says "[t]here is no God and we are his prophets" (64), as this utterly sits well with McCarthy's agnostic or pessimistic view apropos God.

> with the Boy and protecting the Boy from the dangers of their world gives meaning to his life. (90)

With respect to Shengold, a soul murdered child's psyche will feel vulnerable in arenas and dimensions such as the identity, joy, deprivation, family, and the perpetration of crime. Furthermore, the survivors of such abuse, thus, sustain a self-destructive path, which eventually creates in them a strong, conscience-distorting need for punishment (2-20). Within the context of *The Road*, the child develops a myriad of self-destructive behaviors, among which, one can mention the suicidal tone of the boy when he wishes to be with his mother:

> I wish I was with my mom. He didnt answer. He sat beside the small figure wrapped in the quilts and blankets. After a while he said: You mean you wish that you were dead.
> Yes.
> You musnt say that.
> But I do.
> Dont say it. It's a bad thing to say.
> I cant help it.
> I know. But you have to. (22)

The implicit suicidal tendency or the death wish of the boy runs in favor of the concept of lack of adaptive measures once more, as the survivors with the adaptational skills would be flexible enough to conform to the status qua and live on, no matter what happens around them. However, the boy finds himself unable to come to terms with the heinous reality of the crumbling world, hence finding shelter in the dead mother's sanctuary. All said, all the staples of childhood trauma do not detract from the immaculate innocence the child possesses or the prophetic hope he symbolizes in the eyes of not only the father and the old man but perhaps the faith dreamers.

Hillcoat's visual world does not fall short of merit in portraying the child's traumatic moments. Majority of the childhood trauma features and their textual aesthetics have been duly translated to the screen, with the least modification possible, including the boy's bafflement regarding his camp, the lack of adaptive measures and the ethical state he is graced with. Yet, Hillcoat loses, or has to lose, sight of two extremely violent and traumatizing scenes. These two scenes are not merely about childhood trauma, but the traumas that are imposed on children which could traumatize any psyche particularly the children.

The first scene is the one on which the present study has already shed light, namely the infanticide whose witnessing traumatized the child's psyche irreparably: "[w]hat the boy had seen was a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit" (74). The second insufferable scene whose visualization Hillcoat and Penhall decide to lose sight of is "where a cannibal gang is shown to be keeping pregnant women captive in order to consume their babies" (Mcsweeney 45). The scene is simply too much to shoot. I shall need to refer to the pertinent lines even if the readers, against my will, find themselves traumatized by such lines:

> The boy lay with his face in his arms, terrified. They passed two hundred feet away, the ground shuddering lightly. Tramping. Behind them came wagons drawn by slaves in harness and piled with goods of war and after that the women, perhaps a dozen in number, some of them pregnant, and lastly a supplementary consort of catamites illclothed against the cold and fitted in dogcollars and yoked each to each. All passed on. They lay listening. (36)

One might rightly wonder how these scenes could ever be visualized. There must be a reason why no director has dared to film *Blood Meridian* whose traumatizing violence, albeit not as apocalyptic as *The Road,* is nowhere beneath that of *The Road*. This way McCarthy seems to be hard to film, or "unfilmable", as held by the Roger Ebert review: "[h]ow could the director and writer, John Hillcoat and Joe Penhall, have summoned the strength of McCarthy's writing? Could they have used more stylized visuals, instead of relentless realism? A grainy black-and-white look to suggest severely limited resources? I have no idea. Perhaps McCarthy, like Faulkner, is all but unfilmable" (3). By the same token and in an effort to accentuate the adaptation of McCarthy's words, Hoberman opines "[p]erhaps only a visionary genius like Andrei Tarkovsky or a heedless schlockmeister like Michael Bay could have handled the book's combination of visceral terror and mystical reflection" (2). One might assume Hillcoat has already done enough without shooting two more scenes, both of which center on children. Witnessing the only beacon of hope, namely the child, roasting on a spit[42], Hillcoat should assume, will not contribute to the constructive tone of his film; something I shall revert to later.

[42] Some further explanation apropos the controversial state of this scene states: "[i]n the commentary Hillcoat reveals that the baby-on-a-spit sequence was filmed but cut out because it 'didn't work.'" (Mcsweeney 56). However, the sentence "it didn't work" is open to interpretation and the present study offered its own stance above.

Testimony: Listening, Speaking and Muteness

Testimonial threads of *No Country for Old Men*, which were mostly conceived by Sheriff Bell, lent themselves to a tone of jeremiad, for McCarthy felt an inexpressible pain upon witnessing the phenomenal "prophet of destruction", his clinical brutality, and his archetypal murderous drive. It might have taken him just a retirement to survive the traumatic shock, not to mention the soothing effects of some remedial conversations with his sweet loving wife, the scholarly talking cure incarnate. On closer inspection, Bell is complaining, or in trauma-oriented terms, he is acting-out as he feels overmatched by a dark phenomenon whose shadow is utterly cast on his lamenting psyche.

In *The Road*, things are beyond what a monologue or a tone of jeremiad can convey. There is no country for anything in the first place, let alone old men. Ash, dust and the weeping sky are hardly the language or the entities upon which the dialectics of testimonial criticism could be built. What should one listen to or look at? Can a fallen world serve as the testimonial plane on which bearing witness to its ashen sorrows could relieve the traumas, or help its survivors work-through their traumas?

Teasing out the effects of a traumatic event through listening to the voice of survivors is what Marder underpins in the process of post-traumatic survival: "[but] the most urgent and essential claim of *Testimony* is to show that even though we do not 'recover' from our traumatic past, nor can we 'cure' it, 'overcome' it, or even fully understand it, we can and we must *listen* to it and *survive* it by listening to its effects as they are transmitted to us through the voices of its witnesses and survivors" (Marder 4). Within the context of *The Road*, there are barely any witnesses left and the very few ones who are left have either metamorphosed into marauding cannibals wreaking havoc on what is left of humanity, or have no referential or reliable memory of the precise nature of the apocalyptic event. Thus, this study suggests three possible testimonial approaches by which the surviving pair could arrive at a release from their trauma: talking to each other, talking to the dead, and talking to the past (flashbacks).

Despite the tenuous father-to-son bonds McCarthy had shaped in some of his previous novels, the father-to-son bond in *The Road* is at the pinnacle of its kind, unbreakable and everlasting. Other than the dialogues between the father and the old man or the wife, the majority of the dialogues occur between the father and the son, as, in fact, there are no other characters.

Calling the boy a God, the father feels deeply enamored of his son's existence. All throughout the narrative, he has proven how stoutly he depends on his son's words, voice and the therapeutic effect thereof, hence his steadfast dedication to his protection:

> You have to talk to me.
> Okay.
> You wanted to know what the bad guys looked like. Now you know. It may happen again. My job is to take care of you. I was appointed to do that by God. I will kill anyone who touches you. Do you understand?
> Yes. (31)

Mutually, the son feels lost without hearing the father's words. This compulsive dependency on talking to his father is readily discerned when the father is on his last gasp:

> I know. I'm sorry. You have my whole heart. You always did. You're the best guy. You always were. If I'm not here you can still talk to me. You can talk to me and I'll talk to you. You'll see.
> Will I hear you?
> Yes. You will. You have to make it like talk that you imagine. And you'll hear me. You have to practice. Just dont give up. Okay?
> Okay.
> Okay. (103)

Calling these dialogues "quicksilver conversations", Ibarrola-Armendariz acknowledges the same stating: "[q]uicksilver conversations of this kind make evident not only the two main characters' mutual dependence, but also their incapacity—due to the pressure of the events—to express in any cogent way even their most basic emotions and ideas" (10). Apart from this dialogue dependency or the talking cure which has shaped most of the textual weight of the narrative, the pair, in ways of responding to or releasing themselves from the traumatic blight, in which they find themselves tangled, bear witness to the dead. Once all the witnesses have faded away, the survivors, Felman notes, need to trust the voices of the dead in coming to terms with their traumas:

> Felman's notion of testimony teaches us that we must open our ears, hearts, and minds to the voices of the dead as they continue to speak through the voices of the surviving witnesses. She also shows that in opening ourselves to these voices from the past that live in the present, we may also be able to open ourselves to the possibility of a future that might escape being overly determined by, or ensnared

> in, the (unwitting) traumatic repetitions of its (unknown) traumatic past. (Marder 4).

Given the dead traumatic space of the narrative in *The Road*, Felman's notion of opening "our ears, hearts, and minds to the voices of the dead" acquires further significance. All throughout the narrative, the pair do but converse with the dead, not only by listening but also by the painful act of beholding. Instantiation of two dead entities abounds in McCarthy's narrative: the trees as the emblem of the nature and the dead bodies as the emblem of the humanity, which are respectively outlined below:

> Then another. It's just a tree falling, he said. It's okay. The boy was looking at the dead roadside trees. It's okay, the man said. All the trees in the world are going to fall sooner or later. But not on us. (15)
> The mummied dead everywhere. The flesh cloven along the bones, the ligaments dried to tug and taut as wires. Shriveled and drawn like latterday bogfolk, their faces of boiled sheeting, the yellowed palings of their teeth. They were discalced to a man like pilgrims of some common order for all their shoes were long since stolen. (11)

The nature has been "cauterized" by the unknown apocalyptic event and "there are practically no landmarks to indicate what region of the country the pair are traveling in. Trees are charred and limbless, buildings wrecked and blackened, meadowlands stark and gray, rural roads and rivers covered with a thick layer of ash that makes them look frozen and deadly" (Ibarrola-Armendariz 4). To accentuate the gravity of the traumatic dead space, McCarthy writes:

> The world shrinking down about a raw core of parsible entities. The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true. More fragile than he would have thought. How much was gone already? The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality. Drawing down like something trying to preserve heat. In time to wink out forever. (35)

Then, not only do things die, but also the tenuous nature of their names becomes extinct too, hence McCarthy's delicate way of saying "[t]he sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality" (35). Stated differently, the entities and the reality to which they refer, "signifiers and signified" respectively, die out. Nobody will even or ever know what birds were or what they meant. Colors

and food, among many other things, would follow suit. The father and son plumb the depths of this traumatic dead pace as they bear witness to all the dead bodies, trees and animals.

All this traumatic space pits itself against the nostalgic past, its living memories, lively meaning, and vivacious colors, which brings up the third course of the pair's testimonial approach, namely the flashbacks and their recurrent nature.[43]The haunting and spectral nature of flashbacks has previously come to light in this study and I would like to suffice to shed some quick light, via the words of Koçak, on how the liminal mode of this flashback, which runs back and forth in the memory of the father, torments his already traumatized psyche:

> Traumatic moments unfold for the father as he finds this new sunless world hard to accept as a place to live in. Although while talking to the boy, the lack of sunshine and fetid air add to the heavily depressing atmosphere, there are awakening memories of sunny days in the father as he waits for the sun to reappear some day…The man's recollection of sunshine prompted by the light of the fire is for him like a mental reviver as he continuously expects and looks for an exit from the terrain they tragically inhabit. Indeed the father is constantly remembering things from the past even while remaining ever vigilant. (91)

This painfully liminal trope, facilitated by the power of flashbacks, reaches its nadir as my arguments suggest, when the father's memories return to his childhood, upon stumbling into his parental house, through a compelling flashback which fuses the past and present:

> They slipped out of their backpacks and left them on the terrace and kicked their way through the trash on the porch and pushed into the kitchen. The boy held on to his hand. All much as he'd remembered it. The rooms empty. In the small room off the diningroom there was a bare iron cot, a metal foldingtable. The same castiron coalgrate in the small fireplace. The pine paneling was gone from the walls leaving just the furring strips. He stood there. He felt with his thumb in the painted wood of the mantle the pinholes from tacks that had held stockings forty years ago. This is where we used to have Christmas when I was a boy. He turned and looked out at the waste of the yard. A tangle of dead lilac. The shape of a hedge. On cold winter

[43] The recurrent nature of the flashbacks within the context of *The Road* is closely allied to the Caruthian abreactive model and the Freudian repetition compulsion, both of which, in the main, characterize the recreation and the re-enactment of the traumatic moment in the narrative memory of the victim. This immediately invokes the process of acting-out, as opposed to working-through, in mind, whose staples the present study has already shed light on in the first chapter.

> nights when the electricity was out in a storm we would sit at the fire here, me and my sisters, doing our homework. The boy watched him. Watched shapes claiming him he could not see. We should go, Papa, he said. Yes, the man said. But he didn't. (McCarthy 11)

That the warm fire, Christmas and the cozy company of the family have been replaced with void, peeled strips and "dead lilac" place the father in a state of limbo, in between and stagnant. This should evoke Abraham and Torok when they addressed how a traumatic event splits the person's psyche, hence creating a dysfunction in the victim's mind or a "twofold structural disjunction between an experience and its integration into narrative memory, understanding, and communicability" (Baer 10). The father's psychic split can also be explained through Green's concept of "secondary thinking", in that the father is at pains striving to reveal the unspoken, no matter how hard he tries, as Green notes: "[t]he more the analysand speaks, the more he says; the more he speaks without quite saying entirely what he has on his mind, the more he says and reveals that there are things he is not saying" (qtd. in Rapaport 44).

Unable to verbalize the traumatic event, the suicide of his wife for instance, the father precipitates his psyche into an irrevocably elusive and fragmented silence, which as Green notes, has in part to do with the break-down of the victim's discourse in his/her flashbacks to the very event of the trauma: "[secondary thinking] threatens to break the thread of the discourse" (qtd. in Rapaport 45). In like manner, all the flashbacks could amount to Bion's "Beta bits" signaling the inability to utter something when it has already happened on a traumatic plane. As "split off psychotic elements that don't link in order to form coherent and consistent thinking" (Rapaport 44), Father's flashbacks strike a chord with the "Beta bits" insofar as most his dream or memory bits are not coherent nor consistent by any logic. They simply appear and disappear all throughout the narrative with no particular pattern or order, hence their complete accordance with the random non-linear de-hierarchicised nature of Green's "Secondary Thinking".

Another traumatic trope which paves the way towards an efficient testimonial motion is Hartman's visuality and imagery. Awed by Wordsworth's poetic narrative "Boy of Winander", Hartmans' visuality could boil down to his fascination with the particularity of places and the images thereof: "I was interested in how Wordsworth drew his stories and fictions out of his fascination with particular places. These highly charged images, I tried to show how the poet unblocked them, how he developed them" (Caruth and Hartman 632). All this imagery is processed and fortified through the irreplaceable power of nature. Stated differently, "the movement from

charged individual image to visuality is parallel to the movement from specific and haunting places to Nature. Nature is his most generous concept" (633). Thus, the staples of Hartman's visual imagery as a traumatic trope encompass the spatial particularity and the emancipating nature.

Hardly can one witness a vestige of space or nature within the framework of *The Road*. Both have lost their signification to the apocalypse. Having shed sufficient light on the loss of nature, I should wish to approach the concept of space and spatiality, in the realm of which, the father's map could be deemed a meaningful token, which, likewise, loses its significance owing to the apocalyptic blight, as Kaminsky posits

> It becomes increasingly evident throughout the novel that the map the father holds and the road the father and the son travel through are incompatible on several levels. First, the gap between the map and the road is manifested by the deterioration of the map as a referent…Second, the gap presents itself on the linguistic level, as the novel does not include names of locations, forcing the reader to imagine a new world… Third, on the level of meaning, the road becomes a form of blank slate… Fourth, the map is also deteriorating on the material level, an assortment of shreds that need to be reassembled every time the protagonists wish to use it. (2-3)

With nature running out of its generosity and the places falling short of their spatial signification, the father and son step into a traumatic chapter of muteness, in much the same way as the boy in Wordsworth's poetry moves obscurely from a point to another, seeking out even a more obscure response on the part of nature, without uttering a single word. This mute traumatic discourse between the pair and nature is duly defined as apocalypse from Hartman's lens:

> That if the human mind does not live fully, responsively, within nature, or nature does not respond to us, then the end-result, projected forward, is apocalyptic. The death is like a hyperbole of this moment, a hyperbolic act of an imagination that leaps down not up, taking off from a simple failure of response. Should this failure of response accelerate, then we will have no habitat, no mutuality of nature and the human mind. (635)

Thus, if nature does not reciprocate, it will be the beginning of an end. Through Hartman's poetic angle of trauma with the "Boy of Winander" constituting its core, nature is integral to the realization of the shocking images one comes across. Then, Hartman's notion of apocalypse, which is grounded in the non-existent reciprocation between man and nature and the ensuing loss of habitat, holds quite true within the framework of *The Road*, notwithstanding its brutal narrative opposing the soft poetic context of the Boy of the Winander. Lost in translation of the compelling images of the nature, he can only make a "pastoral pipe" blowing the unsaid into it, as he cannot utter a word. To this boy, the traumatic is mute and the mute is traumatic. The dying nature, equally, casts its doomed shadow on the psyche of McCarthy's boy, save that the boy in *The Road* cannot process the fading nature, its extinct animals, and fallen trees. McCarthy's boy, resembling Hartman's boy who blows his traumatized psyche into a pipe, expresses the inexpressible through a flute:

> He'd carved the boy a flute from a piece of roadside cane and he took it from his coat and gave it to him. The boy took it wordlessly. After a while he fell back and after a while the man could hear him playing. A formless music for the age to come. Or perhaps the last music on earth called up from out of the ashes of its ruin. The man turned and looked back at him. He was lost in concentration. The man thought he seemed some sad and solitary changeling child announcing the arrival of a traveling spectacle in shire and village who does not know that behind him the players have all been carried off by wolves. (31)

The music of McCarthy's boy, however, seems to be the last of its kind in much the same way the music of Winander's boy served as an elegiac epilogue whose nature mimicking tone stood for the lyrics he never uttered.

Hillcoat's testimonial space in *The Road*, be it in visual or auditory terms, is informed by certain particular aesthetics, among which I prefer to elaborate on the reality of the death, diminished descriptive tone or the poetic tone, organized pace of the editing, and the masterful voice of Vigo Mortensen. For the testimonial act of speaking and listening to the dead to come alive in the framework of *The Road*, Hillcoat refrains from opting for special effects or computer-generated imagery. Through choosing naturally dead spaces, Hillcoat drives a certain point home, which is asking all his audience to bear witness to the traumas that have already suffocated the nature.

The director urges us to talk to the dead, the truly dead nature here, in much the same way the postlapsarian pair, on a testimonial plane, talked to the dead. For this to be realized, he assumes he does not need to rely on the poetic or mystical tone[44] of McCarthy, as in reality, most of the apocalypse has already occurred in some parts of the world, hence adopting real locations, as mentioned by Hawkins: "[r]ather Hillcoat and his team shot the film in four states (50 locations), utilizing as the director puts it, 'An apocalypse we've already seen' (DVD commentary): post-Katrina New Orleans, Mt. St. Helens, abandoned mines in Pennsylvania. The desolation is established" (54). In another reading by Travers, the same genuine atmosphere is exalted: "[b]ut Hillcoat keeps it as real as the blood the father chokes out of his lungs. Computer effects are minimal. Desolate parts of Pennsylvania, Oregon and Louisiana filled in for the barren, silent, godless road, presumably to the horror of their tourist bureaus" (2).

Many critics have censured the film *The Road* for being slow, eventless and dull. One such critic is Hoberman who holds:

> *The Road*, Cormac McCarthy's Pulitzer Prize–winning, Oprah-endorsed, post-apocalyptic survivalist prose poem—in which a father and his 10-year-old son traverse a despoiled landscape of unspeakable horror—was a quick, lacerating read. John Hillcoat's literal adaptation, which arrives one Thanksgiving past its original release date, is, by contrast, a long, dull slog. (1)

Such critics, I should remark, lose sight of some essential trauma principles. For a testimonial narrative to come alive, the victims need to come to terms with the very essence of the traumatic event through bearing witness, listening and speaking in the main, to what is left of the traumatic thread. In doing so, the victims, I should add, act like chronic beholders, in that they might need even generations to successfully work through their traumas. Reiterating the first chapter, I should add, the psychoanalyst has no other choice than to be patient here, as "[t]his working-through of

[44] To substantiate this study's thesis apropos the fall of McCarthy's poetic finesse in Hillcoat's visual world, it is best to turn to Hawkins's words:

> "The elegiac poetry of McCarthy's evocative prose, employed to express the father's memories not only of his wife but also of various animals, trees, flowers, his childhood home, an uncle he worked with as a boy—all of this is dispensed with. Hillcoat and Penhall consciously eliminate McCarthy's poetic prose (one way McCarthy breaks up the utter bleakness of the present) beginning with Mortensen's first voice-over" (56).

the resistances may in practice turn out to be an arduous task for the subject of the analysis and a trial of patience for the analyst" (155). The course of therapy, Freud warns, can neither be avoided nor hastened.

A quickly edited narrative, Hillcoat shows, stands against a temporally organized and stable narrativization whose aim is to reveal the gravity of the process of working-through. Visualizing the testimonial space of an apocalyptic narrative, whose literary source is mainly targeted at the traumatizing concept of the death on a mysterious and mystical scale, needs to allow its traumatized characters and the audience to bear witness to every single traumatic space as mystically as possible. In so doing, the resultant picture cannot be another fast paced action packed zombie film, for instance.

Hillcoat has a profound propensity for illustrating all threads of the testimonial space, particularly the scenes embodying the act of bearing witness to the dead landscape, such as the deserted gas stations, looted grocery stores, burning-down-to-ash landscapes, industrial ruins, to name but a few, with utmost tact and care (see appendix: figures 15-18). Expectedly, such tactful illustrations cannot run parallel to the other quick entertaining camp of apocalyptic or dystopian films such as *2012* (2009), *Land of the Dead* (2005), and *World War Z* (2013), or as Peebles contends "*The Road* was clearly not going to be *Mad Max* or *The Terminator*" (5).

To create more meaningful threads of testimonial discourse, the shots could have even been longer in order to allow the audience to identify with the pain through which the pair go in bearing witness to the postlapsarian traumas. Barely do the shots, even the longest ones, extend to more than fifteen seconds, which means Hillcoat was already aware of the consequence of long takes and the monotonous air they could provide the film with. However, losing sight of such testimonial rhetoric and the necessity of its intentionally unhurried editing, critics like Hawkins censure the film acerbically for its monotonous pacing[45]: "[d]espite a strong opening and any number of successful scenes, the film's pacing, which is to say its editing, falters, lacks tension. The film's tone both visually and aurally, becomes largely monotone" (57).

[45] Apart from the film's pacing, Hillcoat's visual aesthetics are potentially criticized for being eventless. This, too, seems to originate from the lack of familiarity with or the knowledge of the testimonial and traumatic space which pervades the whole narrative. Both McCarthy and Hillcoat, I argue, aim at nothing but the testimonial discourse of the narrative experienced by the pair in abject efforts to come to terms with insufferable traumas imposed on them. In other words, the narrative has to be eventless as the event, whose true nature is missed like the Lacanian real, has already happened, and all Hillcoat does is to ask us to bear witness to what follows the "missed encounter", hence an efficient testimonial process.

Cramping the style of critics like Hawkins, Hoberman and similar critics opine that Hillcoat's mission was to maintain a coherent narrative, which closely favors the very thesis of this study at this juncture, namely the necessity of such unhurried visual features in order to revitalize the testimonial discourse of the narrative:

> One can either embrace McCarthy's laconic tone or ignore it—Hillcoat does neither. For all the added bad-guy assaults or earthquake-induced Attack of the Falling Trees, his Road never eludes its weighty pedigree—pale by comparison to an action thriller like *Children of Men* or gross out eco-catastrophe like *Land of the Dead*, squandering its ready-made zombie scenario. Where McCarthy was free to focus on how a post-human world might feel, Hillcoat is compelled to illustrate these impressions and organize them into a coherent narrative. (2)

Should one decide to choose two testimonial planes for the traumatic aesthetics of Hillcoat's visual world, specifically in terms of the cast, they should be the visual (acting) and the auditory(voice-over) dimensions of the film. Unlike all the controversies regarding the editing and the pace of the film, barely has a fair critic spoken ill of the Mortensen and Smit-McPhee. This unanimous admiration is most evident is the words of Peebles:

> The shoot received positive press coverage, which often focused on the devotion that Mortensen and the eleven-year-old Smit-McPhee were bringing to their roles, as the two actors appear in nearly every scene in the film. No one was surprised by Mortensen's dedication, which had already been noted in coverage of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001–2003), *A History of Violence* (2005), and *Eastern Promises* (2007). Child actors, however, have generally been cause for more anxiety. But although he was a relative unknown at the time, people were also praising Smit-McPhee. (5)

As the testimonial and traumatic space of the film utterly hinges upon the artistic subtlety of the pair's performance in bringing an air of believability to the eyes of audience and the genuine process of bearing witness to all the post-apocalyptic elements of the narrative, it is more than

lucid that their stellar performance would be tantamount to the success of the film. All the testimonial witnessing which McCarthy has tasked the pair with, including bearing witness to cannibalism[46], falling trees, and death on a broad sense, comes alive quite efficiently at the hands of Mortensen and McPhee, at the behest of Hillcoat[47].

On an auditory note, Mortensen's voice-over seems to be intrinsic to the aesthetics of the testimonial tropes of the film, namely speaking and the listening. The more the traumatized voice-over of Mortensen is heard, the more the audience are exposed to the gravity of the traumas which have befallen his psyche. To elaborate on the power of testimonial listening, I shall fall back on the first chapter: "[but] the most urgent and essential claim of *Testimony* is to show that even though we do not 'recover' from our traumatic past, nor can we 'cure' it, 'overcome' it, or even fully understand it, we can and we must *listen* to it and *survive* it by listening to its effects as they are transmitted to us through the voices of its witnesses and survivors" (Marder 4). Thus, the stronger the testimonial voice, or voice-over here, the better the testimonial listening travels to one's psyche. Mortensen's unparalleled pitch, tone and harmony are all indicative of a successful testimony in the film. The paragraph below written by the playwright Penhall provides us with the details as to how Nick Cave (credited with the original score) and McCarthy himself accommodated Mortensen's voice-over:

> The first thing he said he liked about the film was the voiceover. This had been a source of consternation for some time. Initially, I wanted to write one to fully capture McCarthy's coruscating lilt─ but Hillcoat didn't want it. Then, once it was filmed, the producers wanted the voiceover. Hillcoat reluctantly agreed but our star, Vigo Mortensen, was dead against it. Nick Cave, who was scoring the film, was all

[46] Perhaps the most paramount portrayal of the cannibalism in both the film and the novel occurs when the pair, in an expected effort to explore food, stumble upon a cellar, which, to the father's hunch, might be a precious food storehouse. And ironically it was, save that it was a storehouse of human slaves whose flesh was meant to be consumed gradually for the man-eaters. McCarthy's portrayal is spine-chilling: "[h]uddled against the back wall were naked people, male and female, all trying to hide, shielding their faces with their hands. On the mattress lay a man with his legs gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt. The smell was hideous" (43). Hillcoat's version of this atrocity falls nowhere beneath this depiction in the light of the pair's stunning performance in the face of the dismembered slaves. McPhee's gasping face covered automatically with his hands to avoid laying his eyes on the dismembered slaves and their desperate escape are some of the most memorable scenes ever shot in the film (see appendix: figures 19-21).

[47] Hillcoat does not miss out on any major testimonial space in the film. The testimonial space of death is visually touching on many fronts. Yet, the only testimony Mortensen and McPhee, at the behest of Hillcoat, lose sight of is the infanticide and the pertinent scenes thereof, namely the charred infant on a spit and the pregnant ladies kept captive for their potential children as the food source.

> for it. Meanwhile, Robert Duvall, who is in arguably the best scene in the film, had taken to improvising his own extraordinary dialogue, which some of us thought might make a fine voiceover. When I finally sat down in my Sunset Strip hotel room to finish writing it, with eight worried people on a conference call chewing over every word, the voiceover was beginning to look doomed. Now we had it from the horse's mouth: 'It's very successful. It really works.' I wanted to lift McCarthy off his feet and give him a bear hug. (19)

Apart from the voice-over, the whole film seemed to appeal to McCarthy upon his first opportunity to view it in the presence of Penhall and Hillcoat, which made "America's greatest living writer" utter phrases and sentences like "it's really good", "very powerful", and "a film like no other film I've seen…" (qtd in Penhall 19). The inspirational words of McCarthy, despite "four hand-typed pages of [critical] notes"[48], seemed to valorize not only both Hillcoat and Penhall but also the film, in and of itself. Even though Penhall's screenplay, and Hillcoat's visualization thereof, seem to be a literal transposition[49] of the novel, the modest author would not like to take the credit for the screenplay, when asked to sign it by Penhall, uttering "…it's got nothing to do with me" (qtd in Penhall 19). This trio bond, I should assume, left its undeniable mark on the final construction pillars by which the film hauled itself up.

Survival: Too Good to Be True in the Face of the Ashen Traumas

All the testimonial staples explored so far, such as conversing with the dead, flashbacks and traumatized imagery and muteness, seem to be at the disposal of a teleologically larger aim which

[48] Among the several notes McCarthy wrote down for the director and the screenwriter, one stood out distinctly: "Hillcoat had cut perhaps the loveliest and harshest exchange in the film: 'What would you do if I died?' the boy asks his father. 'I'd want to die, too,' he replies, with the blunt tenderness which characterises the book. 'This exchange,' McCarthy insisted with exquisite understatement, 'is important.' Hillcoat hastily restored it" (Penhall 19).

[49] I am referring to the three most primary, if not primitive, adaptational categories put forth by Cartmell as follows: (I) transposition: a direct transition from fiction to film with as little modification in the source text as possible; (II) commentary: a source text is taken and the flight from the fiction realm to the visual realm, herein, entails some certain alterations in some respects as seen fit by the adapter; (III) analogy: a distinct deviation from the source text occurs here as if another work of art has been created (Leitch 93). Linda Hutcheon's voice in *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), which emphasizes the novel and creative interpretation of the adapted work beyond the original text, should be of high significance and pertinence herein.

cannot be but survival. Survival seems to be a misnomer for the context of a narrative whose elements have all perished in one way or another. McCarthy's narrative seems to cause strong consternation regarding ecological state of the world and how the same could be said of mankind. Looking at his son's face, the father painfully utters "something was gone that could not be put right again" (52).

All throughout the narrative, the father's consternation regarding his son's life, and by extension the life of the planet, resonates through and through. The narrative in which McCarthy places his "fire-carrying" pair is in no state to help the odds of their survival. Indeed, the narrative itself, on an ironic note, seems to have suffered a blow or two from the atrocious apocalypse as well, duly noted in the words of Kollin: "like an ancient text exhumed from the desert in bits and pieces, as if the narrative itself did not quite survive the catastrophe in full form" (166). In the lines yet to come, I will intend to investigate three paths through which the narrative leans towards the concept of survival and how it fares within the grave aftermath of an apocalyptic trauma. I have titled them as follows: the traumatic wasteland, the emancipation, and in-between mystery.

The more the "fire-carrying" pair journey into death and ash along the road, the more their psyches are traumatized by the rummaging marauders, cannibals, charred infants, dead animals, earthquakes and falling trees. In the forlorn hope of finding a sanctuary, they trudge towards south only to be further disillusioned by the likes of what they have already witnessed. Emaciated in the body and wounded in the heart and mind, they still fight for a better place or a utopia, unaware of the endless dystopian terrain awaiting them. This sentiment is rightly noted by Kollin:

> Even though they are in search of a better place, the father and son do not arrive at a new Eden, as the contemporary American road novel often promises. Instead, they are stuck with a fallen world that appears beyond redemption. There is no certainty of a return to a paradise or any assurance that they can remake life to resemble how it once was. At one point, McCarthy explains that the man realized he was keeping up a false front in the face of great doom. (162)

This disillusioning path, which brings nothing but despair and doom, is the path of trauma, as I would like to use my liberty to call it so. It is more in line with the Freudian "repetition compulsion", insofar as the pair wallow in further recurrent traumas bearing witness to traumas as

diverse as death, violence, starvation, isolation, and soulless nature, as they journey to the depth of darkness. To sustain this path, violence, among all the mentioned traumatic constituents, seems to be the centerpiece, as addressed in the words of Harrison:

> In *The Road* the future revolves around surviving the present and the possibility of a better chance of survival later on, and all survival in that world, as we have seen, relies upon the use of violence. At the same time, the consequences of survival through sustained violence are extended to an extreme and globally destructive level in this novel, where the country is reduced to the physical wasteland… (243).

This traumatically violent path, which might approach the destination of survival, sets in motion the very devastating split between the man and the wife, for what the man calls "survivor" is frowned upon by his wife who conversely calls it "walking dead in a horror film":

> We're survivors he told her across the flame of the lamp.
> Survivors? she said.
> Yes.
> What in God's name are you talking about? We're not survivors. We're the walking dead in a horror film.
> I'm begging you.
> I dont care. I dont care if you cry. It doesnt mean anything to me. (22)

Perhaps the logic behind the suicide of all the other families to whose bodies the pair bore witness resembles the very same logic which made the wife fade towards her own death. This suicidal preference over further traumatization, whose only gift is survival, is not just a post-traumatic response but instead stems from an ideological ground:

> The woman's decision to kill herself and forego the journey comes not from some post-traumatic response, but from having a different set of embodied experiences that have provided her with a different knowledge and understanding of what the future might entail…In some ways, the woman's assessment of what the future might hold may in fact be more accurate than the man's. Life on the road is full of misery and suffering, with some people facing greater torment than others. (Kollin 170)

The philosophical stance against this survival path, which encompasses further traumatization, is what intensifies the gap between the man and his wife. Basing his rationality on the question of "If they [we] are not survivors, who are they [we]?" (Gwinner 142), the man opposes his wife's stance, on which Gwinner expounds:

> The man acknowledges the "madness" of such philosophizing, especially of arguing the "pros," presumably, and so the woman's suicide effectively denies the need for more of such debates. With her death, the novel dismisses explicit philosophical inquiry into notions of being as a "dead end." If "she was right," then the man and the boy are survivors without the benefit of secure self-identification as such. (142)

Calling the whole concept of emancipation and redemption into question and seeing nothing but a mirage of salvage at the end of the road, the man's wife, and by extension a great many who fall into the same camp, dismiss this traumatizing arduous journey as irrational, hence taking their own lives. The suicidal camp of the narrative take their lives, heedless of its repercussions for the surviving camp, namely further traumas imposed on the survivors and further impossibility of lingering on the road. Put differently, the suicidal camp unwittingly renders the traumatic survival even further traumatic for the survivor, hence lowering the odds of the emancipation for the ones who choose to walk the road to the very end. Philips's concluding interpretation duly converges with this thread of argument: "[t]hus to read *The Road* for signs of hope and redemption is to misread it, and worse: it is to miss the boat not by an hour or a day, but by an epoch or even an era. In *The Road*, there is no boat: all boats have been sunk" (188).

The non-redemptive path of survival, then, can be closely allied to Caruthian jargon of impossibility of growth or recovery and Freudian compulsion to repeat, in that the trauma victims, the father and son here, cannot salvage their psyche from the traumas imposed on them every moment of way. This should also evoke the dichotomy of acting-out and working-through, founded by Freud and later adopted by LaCapra, the former of which seems to fit the bill better than the latter, as the pair, in the logic of the non-redemptive path, seem to be compulsively hovering around the very same traumas, if not new ones, which paralyzed their psyche in the first

place (apocalypse). Not only can they not reverse the traumatic repercussions of the past, but they also seem to deteriorate their psychic condition by exposing it to new traumatic phenomena all along their harsh journey, hence caught in the horrifying traumatic wasteland, as titled at the outset of my analysis, for eternity. Edwards's words seem to capture the soul of this path quite efficiently: "*The Road,* in the end, is a prophetic hieroglyphic of horror, an American jeremiad more terrifying than even the Puritan imagination could conjure" (60).

The second course open to our trauma-oriented exegesis is what I call emancipation. Before I set about shedding light on what I mean by this path, it is my preference to elucidate how McCarthy allows his narrative to approach its ending moment. The son eventually loses his resilient yet mortal father to the chronic disease whose name was kept from the audience as furtively as the very nature of the apocalyptic accident. Imploring his father to take him with himself, the son is turned down yet urged to carry the fire after him and to be the voice of the messiah he thought he was:

> I want to be with you.
> You cant.
> Please.
> You cant. You have to carry the fire.
> I dont know how to.
> Yes you do.
> Is it real? The fire?
> Yes it is.
> Where is it? I dont know where it is.
> Yes you do. It's inside you. It was always there. I can see it.
> Just take me with you. Please.
> I cant. (103)

Highlighting the paramount importance of "the fire" and how the lofty mission of protecting "the fire" lands on his shoulders from then on, he leaves his son with his cold body; the same "gift of coldness" his wife bestowed upon the man was bestowed upon the son as "the final gift": "[h]e slept close to his father that night and held him but when he woke in the morning his father was cold and stiff. He sat there a long time weeping and then he got up and walked out through the woods to the road" (104).

The monumental and symbolic fire, or the hope and emancipation incarnate, is ultimately handed down. The archetypal father who obliviously moves past his son in Bell's dream in *No*

Country for Old Men, trusts his son with the fire wholeheartedly, signposting hope, life force, and the redemption. In *No Country for Old Men*, Bell is awed by his father as a larger than life person, to whom he will always be a child. In *The Road*, or an apocalypse later, the state of the play is reversed. Not only do the archetypal father and son meet one another in a bond, as unprecedented as the very apocalyptic narrative into which McCarthy breathes the life of his life work, but the Promethean fire, or the beacon of hope in a wasteland, meets the destined hands of the messianic hands. It is through this exegetic account that the aesthetics of the second path, this study puts forth, favor the redemptive stance as utterly opposed to the traumatizing destructive path.

Having gone through a long saga of traumatic ordeals, the son gets the last traumatic blow, namely the father's death. How can such a drowned psyche ever revitalize itself now that it has lost the only hope it ever had? How can the audience, in like manner, find a way out of the traumatizing cul-de-sac the narrative has put them up against?

The duet has changed to solo, yet the emancipation lingers on. Hardly three days after the fathers' death and a mysterious man, who had long been watching the boy, "hove into view" (McCarthy 104). Seeming to have gone through so much, given the smashed and scarred state of his face, the man enters into a dialogue with the boy:

> Where's the man you were with?
> He died.
> Was that your father?
> Yes. He was my papa.
> I'm sorry.
> I dont know what to do.
> I think you should come with me.
> Are you one of the good guys?
> The man pulled back the hood from his face. His hair was long and matted. He looked at the sky. As if there were anything there to be seen. He looked at the boy.
> Yeah, he said. I'm one of the good guys. (104)

Resting assured he is one of the good guys, he equally enquires into whether he carries the fire or not:

> Are you carrying the fire?
> Am I what?
> Carrying the fire.
> You're kind of weirded out, arent you?
> No.

> Just a little.
> Yeah.
> That's okay.
> So are you?
> What, carrying the fire?
> Yes. Yeah. We are. (104)

That in the midst of an apocalypse, goodness and fire find the boy is nothing short of a miraculous emancipation, or in the words of the father in an effort to console his son's consternation concerning the little boy, and all the little boys by extension, whom they could not help earlier: "[g]oodness will find the little boy. It always has. It will again" (104). Later, the mysterious man reveals that the goodness and the fire are accompanied by his son and daughter, namely a family. Running a family through an apocalypse is yet another sign of hope whose seed McCarthy intends to plant. This is not the first time McCarthy's apology for the concept of family is revealed. In *No Country for Old Men*, not wanting to raise one's children[50]constitutes a major jeremiad of a monologue of chapter VI.

Given the critical stage in which McCarthy was writing this novel in terms of raising his own son and all the fatherly affection he felt for his son, these threads of authorship seem to be autobiographical as well[51]. Then, the familial moral compass which McCarthy utilizes to ameliorate the pains of apocalyptic traumas seems to mesh well with the redemptive path this study has set forth. Peters manifestly brings to light how McCarthy underscores the role of the redemptive unit of family:

> We know almost nothing of the family The Boy joins, and for a novel that has been almost unrelentingly pessimistic, The Boy's sudden good fortune is jarring. But the point, here, is that while the conclusion underscores the thematic significance of small family units in dystopian literature. …McCarthy is signaling that the family unit is not only a survival method in a dystopian world, but also a grounding point

[50] Refer to my arguments of Balaev's Growth vs. Caruth's Intergenerational Trauma in chapter two.
[51] McCarthy clearly calls his son the co-author of the book as he was deeply inspired by his character: "McCarthy has said that his young son John, born in 1998 and eight years old when *The Road* was published, was very much his inspiration for the story and the character of the boy. '[A] lot of the lines that are in there are verbatim conversations my son John and I had,' he told John Jurgensen of the *Wall Street Journal*. 'I mean just that when I say that he's the co-author of the book'" (Peebles 13).

> for the existential struggle endemic to it. He closes the novel by re-affirming the one reliability in a crisis: families. (92)

The profoundly revered concept of family and its instantly urgent essence in the narrative is interpreted through a further activist modality, which extends its nature towards other children and other humans. This interpretive mode is tangibly witnesses in the words of Johns-Putra: "[t]he conclusion to the plot refines the definition of what it is to care for and about children…A closer reading of *The Road* suggests an alternative ethos, that doing the best by our children, inasmuch as they stand for the generations of the future, requires more than simply caring about and them alone. It requires a reaching out to others—to other children and, indeed, other humans" (21). Losing sight of this altruistic mode of thinking towards children and other humans is as detrimentally life-devastating as losing sight of nature and the ensuing apocalypse. Shortly put, both are equally apocalyptic.

All the symbolic threads and images, namely "the fire", "the good guys", and "the family" which are incorporated into the arguments of the second path (emancipation), are indicative of hope and redemption and sustain the power of symbolization through the critical lens of Zizek and Onega/Ganteau in coping with the traumas of the narrative. In the words of Zizek, the victim has to destabilize the devastating impact of the traumatic event through creating a symbolic web of images around him/her (47). The father and the son find their only beacon of hope through indoctrinating themselves to rely on the aforementioned themes in order to grow out of their apocalyptic traumas, unaware of the significant hope they themselves instill in the audience. Thus, while father and son seek refuge in the images and symbols, the audience, equally, take refuge in them as the only threadbare entities upon which the fate of the narrative vitally hinges.

It now transpires that McCarthy's "south" is another redemptive trope by which the trauma of the barren wasteland of *The Road* could be tackled. No matter how many trees fall or how deeply the trauma of cannibalism and infanticide penetrates their psyche, the father and son, do not, even for a moment, think of straying away from the route towards "south":

> Are we going to die?
> Sometime. Not now.
> And we're still going south.
> Yes.
> So we'll be warm.

> Yes.
> Okay. (6)

Construed as the utopian salvation out of the apocalyptic ash, "south" provides the pair with dreamy outlooks and ideal fantasies of "other children" (22) living peacefully. This constructive impetus behind trudging towards "south" is explicated in the words of Walsh: "one of the most symbolic themes of the novel is that the South as physical space, imaginative entity and narrative focus acts as a redemptive agency when all else seems to have vanished. The motivation behind this may be that the father believes that the climate will be marginally better there or that some kind of life may have prevailed…" (*McCarthy Journal* 52). Later, Walsh, as his conclusive axiom, combines the utopian role of the "south" with the symbol of "fire" upon which I have shed light previously:

> Although ashen, wasted and ostensibly dystopian, *The Road* succeeds in reviving the most cherished geocentric American myth of the frontier, of a new physical, imaginative and spatial beginning. In what is a major symbolic gesture McCarthy re-inscribes this national myth; in so doing, he reverses the westerly spatial movement of his own characters, and we leave the boy as he continues to carry his light into the South. (54)

Another unwaveringly traumatic image which barely steps away from McCarthy's fallen world is the shopping cart. Reminiscent of the pre-apocalyptic days of consumerism, abundance and affluence, the cart, now, is nothing but an outdated container for the very essentials which barely suffice for survival. Excoriating humanity for consumerism, ingrained in their insatiable sense of greed, and ungratefulness, the cart does portray a stark line between the prelapsarian and postlapsarian eras, as illustrated in the words of Wilhelm:

> The shopping cart, one of their most treasured material helpers, is also both a physical and symbolic container. Its core function in the once prosperous society from which it was created was to carry surplus groceries by the abundance, foodstuffs, of such abundance one literally had to cart them away. Now, it remains as a stark reminder of plenty, but like so many objects it is an unstable sign, for

> fitted with a sidebar motorcycle mirror, the cart also functions as post-apocalyptic roadster, its "trunk" loaded with the precious items necessary to their desperate existence, and serves as a testament to human creativity and determination in the face of catastrophe (132).

Similarly referred to as "transcendental homelessness" (qtd in Walsh. 281), Ellis points out, through a highly symbolic image, that "the only people we see perpetually pushing shopping carts on our *own* streets are the homeless" (281). This, in the rhetoric of trauma, evokes Baer's "twofold structural disjunction" once more. The shopping cart, indeed, facilitates the formation of a liminal space in the narrative which serves the characters and the audience as a limbo: somewhere in-between. This way, the already split psyche of the surviving pair, and more possibly the audience, falls down to the very pitfall of liminality out of which they seem to have a hard time climbing. The purgatory into which the cart plunges the characters, and the audience alike, is as haunting as all the other trauma tropes such as the infanticide and cannibalism. In a broader sense, this liminal purgatory is even worse than the infanticide and cannibalism, in that the pair seem to find a way of fighting the mentioned traumas as they are tangible, concrete and touchable. In contrast, the abstract limbo the cart has created can neither be fought nor forgotten insofar as it is nothing but an image whose haunting shadow will prevail.

The bunker scene of *The Road*, as another symbolic image, is nowhere beneath the shopping cart in terms of the traumatic gravity. Offering "Crate upon crate of canned goods" (McCarthy 54), the bunker was a shelter inside which the pair took refuge for a few days. Lavishly feasting on the bunker's magnanimous supplies, the pair soon realize this could not be more than a sweet bitter memory, as they had to leave it behind. A flashback to the preapocalyptic era, the bunker scene could also be a reflection of McCarthy's censuring of the consumerist habits where a bunker filled with tons of tinned goods will not do the pair any good; in much the same way as the preapocalyptic habits of waste did not but hasten the speed towards the apocalypse. The bunker scene, displayed as refreshment at first sight, is not but a page of melancholy and nostalgia in the trauma book of the father, as noted in the words of Koçak: "[n]otwithstanding the agreeable atmosphere and happy discovery of a well-stocked larder in a luxurious temporary abode, he needs little by way of incentive to continue his life with his father. The father experiences nostalgia upon

encountering objects and memoirs from the past" (89). The trauma of consumerism and its ineffectual postapocalyptic fate, this study suggests, seems to be intensified by such images.

Equally germane and meaningful here is the redemptive power of storytelling and its impact on not only on the formulation of the second path but the whole narrative. As Hustvedt contends, a separate plane of psyche hosts the traumatic event(s) whose narration or storytelling, likewise, abides by separate and exclusive rules and principles. This way, as the author avers, "Trauma isn't part of the story; it is outside story. It is what we refuse to make part of our story" (51-52). Testimonial monologues of Sherriff Bell in *No Country for Old Men* were the plane which accommodated the irreversible traumas of the narrative separately and as it shaped an utterly exclusive line of storytelling, McCarthy, proposed by this study, italicized this plane. This disjunction loses its clarity to the omnipotent nature of the post-apocalyptic atmosphere in The Road.

The author cannot allow one particular plane of narrative to host the traumas of the characters as the traumas are so overwhelmingly ubiquitous as to conquer each and every corner of the narrative, not to mention the very ambiguity of the apocalyptic event whose narrational allusion seems to be far beyond reach. Indeed, one could dare to claim that there is no separate plane to host the traumas and, in one way or another, all the planes are informed by the traumatic event. Briefly, "there is no other tale to tell" (McCarhty 14), but the tale of the trauma(s). As all the planes are traumatized, the characters, in ways of redeeming their wounded soul through storytelling, fall back on their own dreams or fantasies, as Walsh's commentary duly affirms the same:

> [T]he son pleads with his father to read him a story (7), and the father obliges, recounting '[o]ld stories of courage and justice as he remembered them' (41). At one stage the child starts to develop his own fantasies about '[h]ow things would be in the south' (54), where he even dares to imagine a community of sorts, perhaps one including other children. (*McCarthy Journal* 53)

And these fantasies, a good part of which emerge as flashbacks to the preapocalyptic era, do salvage the pair from exposing themselves to excessive traumatization. One of these emancipating narrational flashbacks is the fishing trip the man went on with his uncle:

> There was a lake a mile from his uncle's farm where he and his uncle used to go in the fall for firewood. He sat in the back of the rowboat trailing his hand in the cold wake while his uncle bent to the oars. The old man's feet in their black kid shoes braced against the uprights. His straw hat. His cob pipe in his teeth and a thin drool swinging from the pipebowl…This was the perfect day of his childhood. This the day to shape the days upon. (6)

Thus, the fantasy of utopian land where children fare safely and the flashback to the preapocalyptic fishing trip, respectively for the son and the father, serve as the very few therapeutic storytelling staples in which the pair can seek refuge. Allowing the echo of the sentence "[t]his was the perfect day of his[my] childhood. This the day to shape the days upon" to resonate within his psyche, the father seems to rise above the occasion enabling his psyche to sugarcoat the apocalyptic pains that have already blighted them.

Transposing the notion of survival akin to the "Art of Trauma", Laub and Podell claim that "survival itself should be considered as a type of art of trauma" (991). Alluding to Celan's poetry, Laub and Podell exalt the art of poetry as the medium or art which enhances the likelihood of holding efficacious dialogues with the past as well as providing the means of the survival. Baer, too, relies on the unparalleled power of poetry to delineate how a poetic engagement can allow the trauma victim to come to terms with the unresolved experience, hence a successful survival. Then, "considering the poetic representation of unresolved experience" (9), is the redemption many trauma victims yearn for. McCarthy's language in *The Road* is deeply rhymed, poetic and lyrical. Regarding such poetic nuances, Lincoln's thoroughgoing account seems to be apt:

> *The Road* begins in ballad lyric prose under the ashen graylight of a nuclear winter: 'When he *woke* in the *woods* in the *dark* and the *cold* of the *night* / he'd *reach out* to *touch* the *child sleep*ing bes*ide* him.' The anapests, reverse spondaic feet, and alliterative rhythms give fine classic cadence to the tale's opening, a father-son love story at the end of the world, all balanced in blank verse couplets turning back on themselves to Shakespeare, Milton, and Yeats. McCarthy classically cadences a lyric narrative to tell a terrible journey… (164)

Perhaps by rendering the language profoundly poetic, McCarthy is aiming at an even deeper meaning: "the impossibility of understanding". The simple language is not sufficient to transmit the impossible, hence turning to a poetic register more frequently to serve the purpose. This lucidly evokes Linda Belau's theoretical vantage point which is predicated on the inadequacy of the signifier, which is language here. From Belau's position, trauma is the pitfall of the language and its deficient capacity to convey the "real" in the guise of the symbolic and this failure cannot and should not make something sublime or celestial out of the traumatic experience. Apropos this impossibility, she contends:

> Because traumatic experience is grounded in the repetition of an impossibility, it is indelibly tied to the real beyond the signifier. In this sense, trauma opens up an ethical space beyond the symbolic which is, nevertheless, intimately tied to the materiality of the signifier and, therefore, to our social and linguistic destiny…The psychoanalytic intervention assures us, then, that we are responsible in the face of something that exceeds symbolic guarantee. This is the ethical dimension of trauma that gets left behind when we attempt to place traumatic experience beyond language and representation, beyond the traumatic materiality that is the signifier. (par 2)

This defective linguistic feature to address the impossible real is evidently and analogously reflected in Derrida's "'impossibility and necessity' of bearing witness to the 'unexperienced experience'" (qtd. in Wolfreys 133) and Lanzmann's "Obscenity of Understanding", which were detailed in chapter one. Within the context of *The Road*, McCarthy, this thesis posits, embellishes his thoughts with as many artfully poetic terms, rhythm, and devices as possible not only to reach the emancipating aesthetics of "the art of trauma" within the hypothetical arsenal of Laub and Podell, but also to compensate for the inherent lack of language as a signifier, to recall Belau, Derrida and Lanzmann, in expressing what is practically out of its jurisdiction (real). Put differently, the weight of the apocalyptic event is too much to be contained in the aesthetics of a plain language insofar as its material signification is lost to something beyond one's ken. It now transpires that McCarthy's deeply poetic and literary language is targeted at revitalizing the

traumatized audience in conjunction with promoting the aesthetics of language in an effort to beat the material signifier's defeat.

The third exegetic account is what I call the in-between mystery. Prior to shedding light on the semantics of this compound term, I should wish to entail the last paragraph of the novel, for it serves as the cornerstone of my future arguments:

> Once there were brook trout in the streams in the mountains. You could see them standing in the amber current where the white edges of their fins wimpled softly in the flow. They smelled of moss in your hand. Polished and muscular and torsional. On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming. Maps and mazes. Of a thing which could not be put back. Not be made right again. In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man and they hummed of mystery. (105)

McCarthy's repertoire of codes in this closing coda is compelling, thought-provoking, and alarming. Is he lamenting the extinction of the trout or the annihilation of the human civilization, mother earth and nature, whose maps mean very little once an apocalypse happens? Or is he urging us all to solely bear witness, contemplate, and hum the ancient paradoxical mysteries of man?

Not a lot of emancipating voice is heard within the traumatic codes of this paragraph. Nor is one inclined to think otherwise once the word "mystery" stands out, hence a liminal space which could shift to any direction in the light of existential free choices man makes. But should the scale of this liminality weigh in favor of care or otherwise oblivion? Or for that matter, where does McCarthy stand? McCarthy's fiction has constantly ushered in novel waves of ethical support for nature and earth. *The Road* marks the inception of a shift from the individual traumas of the humanity towards collective apocalyptic traumas, which asks for nothing but call to care and action. When asked what he really wanted his audience to ascertain by *The Road*, McCarthy replied: "It would be to just simply care about things and people and be appreciative. Life is pretty damn good even when it looks bad and we should be appreciative more. We should be grateful" (qtd. in Hardwig 49).

The constructive outlook the author of *The Road* has apropos the trauma of the apocalypse should immediately evoke the words of Rothberg whose trauma rhetoric meshes, in an unmediated style, with the very underlying apocalyptic narrative aesthetics of *The Road*, for Rothberg spurs us to take more heed of the traumatic events such as global labor and climate change than Holocaust and Euro-centric events. Entitling it "slow violence", Rothberg purports "[t]he slow violence of

climate change does not only require a shift in temporal perception away from the shattering event of classically conceived trauma; it also requires a recalibrated understanding of humanist history and subjectivity that displaces (without entirely eliminating) the positions of victim and perpetrator" (xvi). Underlining the future dynamics of trauma, Rothberg goes to great lengths to prompt us to move from suffering and violence towards "resistance, healing, and social change" (xvii). *The Road*, given the outlook of its author and the analogous angle held by Rothberg, should instill in the audience the same determination and morale.

Of immediate pertinence here is Estes's commentary on the same paragraph with an emphasis on the intrinsic sanctity of nature and the humanity's mission in ensuring its longevity: "the passage emphasizes the sacred quality of nature itself and of our interactions with it …the feeling of loss connoted by 'once there were' joins with 'hummed of mystery' to produce a call to action" (214). Furthermore, Estes exploits the Hegelian dialectic model of thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis to better depict how environment emerges "from a background of calamitous loss" (215), which again "serve as a call to action, a call to re-think the ways in which we have written and are writing American spaces" (215). Estes's activist interpretation apropos McCarthy's closing coda, which invokes reform and practical involvement, is best portrayed in what follows:

> Biocentric maps, such as the one etched into living fish at the end of *The Road*, are examples of just such a thing. These biocentric maps stress the intrinsic rights of nature, the imbrication of humans within a web of biota and a flexible and dynamic approach to dealing with the environment. McCarthy's texts, read in terms of a dialectic and culminating with the Hegelian *Aufhebung* of bioecentric maps, thus call for a re conceptualization of the ways in which we conceive of environment, of the ways in which we participate in the writing of American spaces. (216-217)

What, however, casts doubt on the essence of this activist call-to-action modality, sustained by Rothberg, Estes and McCarthy himself, is how McCarthy and his fiction both keep enigmatically silent as to the details and nuances of this path, hence my propensity for the term liminality or in-betweenness. So much, intentionally or otherwise, goes unsaid as to how this liminal conundrum will fare in any direction. McCarthy astutely exhorts the audience to bear witness to a mysterious event that has wreaked havoc on the earth and remains equally and

mysteriously wordless as to how one could find a way out. This purely thought-provoking power of witnessing what remains is elegantly depicted in the words of Rambo:

> In the aftermath of the collapse of the world, there is no end in sight, no destination, and no promise of life ahead. But in the face of these impossibilities, the impulse to impose redemption is replaced, instead, by an imperative to witness to what remains. Could we discover, in these texts, a witnessing breath, not a triumphant one? Instead of leading to a redemptive ending, it may provide a necessary disruption of that familiar framework and a reorientation to life as a *living on.* As readers, we are handed over the perilous question: 'What does it mean to ¡witness to what remains?' The question is not who will save the world but, instead, who will witness its shattering? (115)

Once more, we are reverted to Felman's testimony or testimonial criticism whose heart hinges upon the very act of bearing witness. In other words, it is solely through the act of bearing witness to the unbearable monstrosity of the trauma that one can allow the testimony to come alive. This instantaneously evokes Laub and Podell's model of "witnessing and emptiness" maintaining, "[i]n essence it is only through its indirect and dialogic nature that the art of trauma can come close to representing the emptiness at the core of trauma while still offering the survivor the possibility of repression and repossession" (993).

Thus, the more one gazes into the very labyrinths of the trauma, here the liminal apocalyptic trauma, the more one could cogitate about how McCarthy has brought into being such a mysterious conundrum, hence the birth of the efforts to decipher and work-out the conundrum. Comparing *The Road* to its likes, mostly apocalyptic films such as 2012, McSweeney avers that *The Road* offers something that most apocalyptic films do not, which is offering an open-ended enigma. While most apocalyptic films aim at annihilating the world to have it stereotypically start anew, *The Road* "offers no such easy resolution or formulaic opportunities for redemption, and perhaps this is why, in years to come, it may be seen as one of the most potent and resonant science fiction films of the first decade of the new millennium" (55). The liminal mysteries of *The Road* beneath which its traumatizing narrative runs seem to be barely on anyone's radar, which is what, this essay suggests, ushers in a fresh wave of trauma dynamics.

Hillcoat's Survival Outlook and a Leap of Faith beyond Trauma: Last Words

That Hillcoat's visual aesthetics encapsulate, with perfect economy and tact, all the three exegetic survival accounts this study has offered so far is axiomatic. All the planes including the traumatizing path, the beacon of emancipation, and the liminal space are intrinsically felt throughout the film. Yet, it is the emancipation plane, this study should suggest, which tips the scale in its favor. Put differently, Hillcoat, albeit enamored with McCarthy's non-redemptive and liminal testimonies, decides to affix his own redemptive signature to the bottom of the film.

This signature, serving as the director's epistemological stance towards an apocalyptic trauma plaguing the hearts and souls of humanity, offers the resolution which McCarthy does not, or at least he demands his audience to come up with it. McCarthy's liminal mystical voice stems from the portrayal of "brook trout", on whose back "were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming" (105). He trims his mysterious depiction further through the word "maze" and how it is akin to the ancient "mysteries" of world. The paragraph as elucidated before is hermeneutically the most quintessential part of the novel, which buttresses the constantly thought-provoking and philosophical tone of McCarthy. This vital epilogue, to any critics' despair, faces an elliptical approach at the hands of the director and the screenwriter.

It is of little surprise, then, if Hillcoat's refurbishing or manipulating signature to "a powerful novel's vision of a dystopian future" (Monbiot 29), arouses diverse controversies. Not only has Hillcoat excised the most meaningful paragraph of the literary source but he has also lost sight of the hermeneutics of the mysteries at which McCarthy was aiming. The brook and the magical trout are replaced with a well-fed dog in the company of the family who seemed to quickly adopt the newly orphaned child (see appendix: figure 22). This elliptical transformation seems to be unforgivable in the eyes of Hawkins:

> The other, and in my view unforgiveable, error the film makes is the Oprah-licious ending. As in the novel, after his father's death, the boy meets a man in the road. This man has a family, and he is willing to take the boy with him. The novel ends with a quite mysterious paragraph that speaks to the beauty of trout and the disappearance of nature. The film, on the other hand, invites the entire family to meet the boy at ocean's edge. I guess this would have been okay; they all look filthy

> and ragged, all of them except for the dog. Huh? A dog? Yes, a great looking dog, *so* well-fed. OMG. And they all go off together. And this is how focus groups have ruined American movies: the apocalypse meets Lassie. (58)

Against this raged and rigid state of Hawkins in addressing this scene comes the rationally mild interpretation of Mcsweeney contending "they are a family; they have a dog who has not been eaten; the veteran (Guy Pearce) seems hardened and prepared" (54). That the dog has not been consumed seems to be the redemptive and civilizing mark Hillcoat has left on the ending thematics of the film in the mysterious brook's stead. This assures the boy, and by extension the audience, that the family "carry the fire" and they have not fallen into the camp of cannibals who would not have mercy on humans much less dogs.

Hillcoat, once more, displays the ending scene, albeit deemed overstated by Hawkins and her likes, "as an indication that these are a family just like his own family and that is the hope in it" (Hillcoat qtd in Mcsweeney 54). In an even more upbeat rendering, Hoberman asserts: "my favorite addition to the novel is the close-up of The Post-Apocalyptic Puppy of Hope that appears in the movie's final scene. It's a last-minute Christmas card reminiscent of the voiceover that opens Sam Fuller's Vietnam-set *China Gate*: 'In this ravaged city where people are starving, all the dogs have been eaten except one'" (2).

Hillcoat's redemptive signature, albeit deviating from the mysterious tone of the novel, invokes the same hope and growth which echoes most of the new trauma poetics of Balaev. Resilient enough to grow out of the traumas of a post-apocalyptic cannibalistic era, the family seems merciful, compassionate and united in solidarity. To return to chapter one once more, Balaev diverges from the Caruthian parlance on many fronts, in that she urges trauma scholars to reconsider all the terms like "unrepresentable, unspeakable, timeless, repetitious, contagious and infectious", and instead seek out for untapped alternatives such as rebirth, fluidity and perhaps growth. All such constructive terms should be analogously intertwined with Stampfl's concept of resilience: "[t]he idea of resilience introduces uplifting themes to the study of trauma. Along these lines, ideas of rebirth or redemption come into play, ideas which exceed the concept of recovery defined merely as the return of normal functioning" (136). This way, the Caruthian jargon of abreaction and the Freudian compulsion to repeat, which are exemplified all along the first testimonial path, are repudiated by the redemptive voice of the director who prefers hope, rebirth

and resilience over bitter stagnant acting-out, hence his elliptical signature affixed to the bottom of the film.

Hillcoat's silver screen translation also tends to wittingly miss out on McCarthy's lamenting sentences or phrases like "something was gone that could not be put right again" (52) and "[o]f a thing which could not be put back. Not be made right again" (105), which denote nothing but irreversibility of the trauma. This stance, in trauma tropes, does not seem to sit well with Hillcoat's ideology, hence its elision in the film to enable it to resonate with the voice of hope and growth. Apropos this elision, Peebles contends:

> [o]n a larger scale McCarthy reminds the reader that some things really can't be made right again. Though the film adaptation depicts the bleak environment and the depth and moral significance of the father-son relationship, it backs off somewhat from the novel's eco-tragic elements, suggesting in the end that broader recovery may indeed be possible. (10)

Then, such irreversibility articulated by McCarthy is not only excised but also replaced with the imagery of hope which is portrayed by animals and how they have not been extinct yet, against the way McCarthy speaks of the extinction of all the animals and birds: "[t]hey stood, their clothes flapping softly. Glass floats covered with a gray crust. The bones of seabirds. At the tide line a woven mat of weeds and the ribs of fishes in their millions stretching along the shore as far as eye could see like an isocline of death. One vast salt sepulchre. Senseless. Senseless" (83). Up against all this traumatizing death of birds and animals, comes not only Hillcoat's dog but also another innovatively added beacon of hope like beetle. Trying to get over their shock upon witnessing this phenomenal miracle, they are further amazed by how the beetle ethereally flies away (see appendix: figure 23). This, once more, marks another directorial seal added by Hillcoat to the textual aesthetics of the literary source, which is subtly observed by Peebles: "[t]he film's addition of small hints of the possibility of renewal, like a beetle wondered over by the father and son, leaven the film with a level of hope that…" (13).

Hillcoat's directorial voice of hope does not give up even when the credits roll. Transposing the credits to a cacophony of children's sounds along with the sound of animals and nature, Hillcoat daringly revives all the lost and traumatizing threads of the narrative: children, animals,

and nature. This, albeit deemed a leap of faith by this study, has been censured by many critics who take a dim view of such overstated adaptational changes, as entailed in the interpretations of Peebles:

> *The Road* ends with an affirmation of the revelatory fire that the father and son carry, and a fairly clear sense of optimism for a restored world, tempered only by that minor tone overtaking the sounds of children playing during the final credits—though that optimism feels a bit false after the film has spent some one hundred minutes emphasizing the difficulty of survival. It is a cinematic narrative that flirts with tragedy but avoids it in the end. (16)

Albeit considered overstated by Peebles and perhaps many others, Hillcoat's ending scene embodies the same sense of appreciation to which McCarthy strives to aspire. Returning to his words once more, "It would be to just simply care about things and people and be appreciative. Life is pretty damn good even when it looks bad and we should be appreciative more. We should be grateful" (qtd. in Hardwig 49), one can find the relatively justifiable bond between Hillcoat's ending scene and McCarthy's aspiration towards care, appreciation and gratefulness. One could infer that McCarthy's implicit themes are rendered explicit through the visual world of Hillcoat. McCarthy has never addressed matters of war and politics openly in *The Road* and all the interpretations apropos the Post-9/11 and the war of terror in Bush's administration, far-fetched or otherwise, seem to be the subjective response of the screenwriter and the director, whose comments are mentioned below:

> There is certainly something to do with the decade of the Bush administration . . . In the last decade there has been a lot of fear out there and 9/11 has been part of that. Fear about the environment, fear about the economy, fear about lots of things . . . that setting was meant to highlight what happens when fear takes over. (Hillcoat qtd in Mcsweeney 46)

> [P]ost-9/11, post-Katrina, post-Iraq, ordinary Americans can at last conceive of a world bereft of humanity—a world McCarthy has depicted for decades. (Penhall qtd in Mcsweeney 46)

This subjectivity is by no means unfunded. Through politicizing McCarthy's work, whose transparent visual emblem is the portrayal of the smoke upon the collapse of the World Trade Center, both Hillcoat and Penhall are calling all to action, which is, once more, reminiscent of Estes's activist interpretation, which invokes reform and practical involvement. Rothberg's words, which spur us to move from suffering and violence towards "resistance, healing, and social change" (xvii), can be vividly noted upon this occasion. This way, McCarthy's implicit or passive mysteries of trauma metamorphose to limpidly active notions at the hands of the director and the screenwriter. This resonantly compelling message of the Hillcoat and Penhall is how I prefer to draw this chapter to a close.

The Road, visually and textually, is the tale of humanity's narcissism and how ash defeats it effortlessly. What follows is more apocalyptic and painful than the apocalypse, for the apocalypse did not plant the seeds of cannibalism or infanticide; it was the narcissism of humanity which brought such saturnine trauma chapters into being. Such chapters do not fare well within the codes of absurdity, violence, extremism, jeremiad and even randomness to which the aesthetics of *No Country for Old Men* fairly aspired.

This ashen tale is grounded on a wasteland which is "shorn of its referents and so of its reality" (35). An unfairly losing, if not lost, battle is what it is. It is more than plain to verbally address the new trauma-oriented hope words like resilience, fluidity, growth and rebirth, yet once one bears witness to what the father and son laid eyes on, things might not start to look up, hence the far-fetched and overstated nature of hope and emancipation within this ashen context. Hillocat's beetle and dog of hope are no rival for the cannibals who roast infants. This, then, should be precisely why McCarthy himself refrains from such portrayals of hope and instead urges us to solely bear witness to the traumas which could be simply avoided if we cared. Humanity could save itself the trouble of effortful survival through the effortless vocabulary of care, solicitude and respect regarding not only each other but also mother earth. Few, if not no, trauma notions have a bearing on such vocabulary, and it is all there to be picked up before the ash robs us of it.

Conclusion

Here at the end, precisely unlike the nature of a non-referential trauma narrative, the foregoing study needs to recapitulate the conclusive references to which the chapters of the study contributed. The present project is composed of three chapters whose underlying theoretical narrative revolves around how the concept of trauma tends to inform, if not form, two of McCarthy's selected canonical works, namely *No Country for Old Men* (2005) and *The Road* (2006). The analytical trauma exegesis, whose staples are investigated in depth throughout the first chapter, becomes not only the very premise upon which the analysis of the novels is predicated, but also a point of departure for the study's interpretational forays into some particular trauma moments in the filmic adaptations of the literary sources, which came to life at the hands of the Coen brothers and Hillcoat respectively.

The first chapter of this study touches on some epistemologically significant thought currents which shape the discourse of the trauma. Unfolding the chapter through Caruth's pioneering notions of trauma, this study intends to display her most quintessential concepts such as incomprehensible and non-referential nature of traumas. Allied with such concepts is the haunting or ghostly essence of the trauma from which the victim constantly fails to wrench oneself free. Such spectral threads of argument are further substantiated by Wolfreys's pertinent terms such as "phantasmatic or phantomatic". Freud, I should not hesitate to remark, never leaves the stage of trauma arguments insofar as a good part of Caruth's trauma poetics stems from Freudian dicta premised on his *Moses and Monotheism*.

The metaphorical concept of haunting comes down to earth via the practical notion of flashback. Put differently, flashbacks are the recurrent post-traumatic sensory ordeals, mostly in the guise of dreams or nightmares, out of which the haunted patient or victim finds no way. In this respect, the study has recourse to Hustvedt's findings which are indicative of the very intrusive nature of flashback's visual and auditory fragments, as opposed to the linguistic mode for which the victim finds no use. Ineluctably interlaced with the concept of flashback is the notion of "compulsion to repeat" with which Feud seems to have been credited. Not knowing what has blighted his/her psyche, Freud posits, the victim repeats or acts the moment out, hence a sort of compulsive return to the very moment which has never been made sense of. In the words of Caruth, the moment has not been given a "psychic meaning". All such trauma tropes run in tandem with the Lacanian "real" which is tangential to the very hermeneutics of "missed encounter" or a moment that seems to have never incorporated itself into the realm of signification or the symbolic.

Unassimilable, silent, missed, and mysterious are the terms with which one can characterize "the real" efficiently.

Hartman's rare and innovative thread of trauma aesthetics steps into our trauma discourse next. Enamored with Wordsworth's haunting poetry and his Boy of Winander in particular, he underscores the role of nature in facilitating the processing of the haunting imagery which haunts the boy. Apocalypse, otherwise, is what befalls the humanity. Put simply, if the reciprocal bond between the man and nature falls into disarray in any way, the apocalyptic moment will come into being. The boy's epiphanic journey, the study later adds, is all mute, hence another trope in the trauma rhetoric. This trope is then efficiently meshed with Green's famed concept of "secondary thinking", for the trauma victim cannot reveal the unsaid, even though he/she goes through an ordeal of doing so, hence the silenced psyche.

LaCapra's contribution to the semiotics of trauma occupies the next portion of the developmental narrative of this study. Distinguishing between the particularity of the "loss" and the ambiguity of the "absence", LaCapra is at pains explicating how the conflation of these two could be vexing and irreversibly traumatic. This author, however, opts for the conversion of "absence" to "loss" eventually, insofar as the anxiety inherent in "absence" could only be eradicated through this transformation. In other words, one has to identify a traceable source for the untraceable concept of "absence" and consequently annihilate the same source. This way, the anxiety attendant upon "absence" will wane. The culture of nostalgia and lament is what otherwise awaits the victim.

Of most germane significance at this juncture of trauma survey was the famed dichotomy of "acting-out/working-through", with which Freud is originally credited and for which LaCapra is belatedly famed. From LaCapra's vantage point, which is completely indebted to and analogous with the Freudian model, one could aim for impasse or otherwise revival banking respectively on "acting out" and "working through". The emancipating beacon of hope LaCapra speaks of is at odds with the Caruthian jargon of "unspeakability", "incomprehensibility" and "unrepresentability". Consonant with the voice of LaCapra in this particular province is that of Craps who impugns Caruth's jargon of fixation on the stagnant mode of "acting-out" of trauma. Another grave ramification of not working the trauma through should be how the victim finds himself/herself at the mercy of images and symbols once "acting-out" overwhelms his/hers soul. This is the area in which the voice of Onega and Ganteau resonates through. Žižek's notion, via

his famed saying "[i]n order to cope with a trauma we symbolize" (qtd. in Wolfreys 126), best captures the soul of this thread of arguments.

Release from trauma has brought into being another thought current termed "testimony" in critical trauma studies, which constitutes the next portion of this chapter. The term is indebted to the efforts of Shoshana Felman through her seminal book *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* co-authored by the renowned psychoanalyst Dori Laub. Taking her cue from the above-mentioned thinkers, Marder deems that the acts of listening and speaking constitute the very essence of testimonial discourse of trauma. Inextricably laced to the testimonial criticism, this study has put forth, is Hustvedt's therapeutic perspective apropos trauma through the power of narration and story-telling, which fosters a sense of agency in the victim. This sentiment is readily corroborated by Harmtan, Modell and Mallot later.

It now transpires that all the testimonial efforts of the trauma victims should boil down to nothing but survival, which is the realm in which Laub and Podell fared well. Through the incontrovertible power of witnessing and conversing with the past, the trauma victims have recourse to the art of trauma in shaping efficient survival pathways. Alluding to Celan's poetry, Laub and Podell elevate the art of poetry as the medium or art which effectively mirrors the empowering means of not only conversing with the past but also seeking out the trace of survival. Baer, in like manner, delineates how the poetic engagement can bring the victim to practical terms with the traumatic experience.

Belatedness was the next staple of the trauma discourse to be enquired into by this study. Deriving its nature primarily from Freud and innovatively from Caruth, the concept basically purports that the traumatic experience is too much to be digested at the time of its occurrence, hence its initial slip from the memory only to be recovered later. This is how the term "latency" can be accounted for in the hermeneutics of trauma. Opting for the term "Nachträglichkeit", which was translated to "afterwarsdness", Laplanch perfected the belatedness vocabulary of Caruth. Eventually, Caruth and Laplanche concur unanimously with the "uninterpreted or unassimilated" nature of the trauma. The belatedness trope, the chapter has already delineated, attracts proponents and opponents alike. Disregarding the socio-cultural schemes and overemphasizing the linguistic and psychic facets of the traumatic event, Stampfl argues, are among the salient points shaping the complaining voice of the opposing camp.

Balaev's new voice occupies the next portion of this chapter, which resonates with fluidity, rebirth and change. Calling into question most staples of the Caruthian jargon, Balaev strives to put on a pedestal the role of the trauma victim's ability to rebuild his/her identity upon traumatization, hence the outlook of growth and rebirth. Furthermore, trauma is not a disease, nor is it contagious or infectious. Put differently, trauma has the potential to be expressed, represented and given voice to, while the classic approach contended otherwise and believed trauma was unspeakable, silent and haunting. The same insight pervades the trauma thoughts of Belau who purports that trauma falls into a representable and accessible domain. The materiality of the signifier in a traumatic narrative, she asserts, is eclipsed, if not eradicated, by the impossibility of the experience or the original encounter, hence a left-behind ethical condition and the complexity of the victim's ethical/psychic mode. From Belau's position, trauma is the pitfall of the language and its deficient capacity to convey the "real" in the guise of the symbolic and this failure cannot and should not make something sublime or celestial out of the traumatic experience

Childhood trauma is the arena to which the next staple of this chapter was the allocated. Reviere's analytical thinking in this area is what founds a good part of this study's focal attention. A traumatized child, according to the lights of Reviere, is devoid of the advantages of self-awareness, adaptation, schemas and flexibility. Furthermore, such children will not be able to make sense of the reality surrounding them. Shengold's notions apropos childhood trauma provides a new insight towards our efforts regarding this chapter's analytical efforts through adding the concept of "soul murder". A soul murdered child, Shengold should contend, might never feel whole in dimensions such as identity, joy, deprivation and family. Some, to one's dismay, might even sustain a self-destructive path, which eventually creates in them a strong, conscience-distorting need for punishment.

Craps's insight is what emerges on the stage of this chapter's analysis at this juncture. His ethical ideals are what most trauma scholars have lost sight of. Centered on TRC and awed by the novel *Mother to Mother*, Craps, this study implies, urges us to put the Caruthian rigidities behind us and instead unearth the ways by which the dialectics of pain and suffrage between or among cultures could be not only explored but also alleviated, hence new horizons towards forgiveness and redemption.

I drew this chapter to a close through a pithy account of Freudian "the uncanny". Having defined it through instantiation and exemplification, the chapter is quick to adduce its cardinal

constitutive elements such as repetition, death, and alienation. Whitehead's vantage point apropos a simple fateful repetition and the uncanny sense thereof shapes the section pertaining to the element of repetition. The concept of death acquires its significance through a close dialogue with the concept of repetition too. Through its repetitive yet unknown nature, death traumatizes "the uncanny" by means of adding to its already deeply bizarre and frightening state. Alienation, as the last piece of this spectrum, is the feature which dramatizes the feeling of uncanny by exposing one to the unfamiliar state of a familiar entity. Rothberg's more abstract, culturally diverse, and bio-political direction is how I wish to bring this chapter to an end, asking my readers to listen for the novel voice of trauma inviting us to veer towards the "possibilities of resistance, healing, and social change" (xvii).

Chapter two of this study aims at McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* and the adaptation thereof under the same title. Having shed light on the bizarrely traumatic state of Chigurh and his peculiar cattle gun as his murder weapon, the chapter divulges how his insanity pits against his particular philosophical principles, hence a liminal paradoxical state. To all this comes his unstoppable spectrality. Put differently, Chigurh, in all his liminality, insanity and inhumanity, is the phenomenal ghostly trauma of the narrative, in that he haunts his victims by virtue of his spectral stealth in much the same way the ghost of trauma never ceases to chase its victims. All this evokes traumas tropes of "phantasmatic" and "Phantomatic", which came to light earlier. Later, the chapter has recourse to the breath-taking encounter between Chigurh and Moss as the most traumatic or ghostly encounter of the narrative, which is further substantiated by the textual instances extracted from the novel.

This haunting spectrality, the chapter next delineates, plans its incursion into the arena of the generic nuances as well, hence the genre ambivalence. This subversion of the genre or the ambiguity must be what cajoled the Coen brothers into visualizing this novel as their first direct effort in adaptation of a literary source. Later, the chapter sheds light on the two paths by virtue of which this generic subversion occurs, aka the eccentricities of the showdown and an aberrant Chigurh.

Departing from Chigurh's barbarity marks this chapter's arrival at Bell's defeat, which shapes most of the testimonial staples of the narrative. The chapter pursues Bell's psychic pain and the monologues thereof as the plane on which the testimonial staples of the narrative fall. Having borne witness to war, crime, drugs, rape and many other atrocities, Bell has no more room

for another phenomenal trauma like Chigurh. Unable to digest this new chapter of malice and inhumanity, Bell responds to this via the jeremiad of the testimonial monologues placed at the very outset of each chapter. Such monologues are reminiscent of the Caruthian jargon of incomprehensibility and Felman's testimony. Later, the chapter opts for the most moving monologues of the book whose weight is undeniably heavy on the psyche of Bell. Hustvedt's talking cure, as another corresponding angle by which the monologues could be scrutinized, seems to have been eclipsed by the Caruthian jargon of incomprehensibility.

Departing from the McCarthy's monologues, the study, prior to shedding light on the brothers' treatment of the monologues, veers in the direction of the shared stylistic and thematic aesthetics between the McCarthy and the Coen brothers, including the aberrant or idiosyncratic characters, subverted genres, western (anti-western) genre, and violence. Later, the chapter displays how the opening voice-over of the film captures the soul of almost the majority of McCarthy's moving monologues, with the sheer tone of defeat deeply felt in the voice of Jones and the low-key dark images portrayed by the brothers at the very outset of the film. However, the brothers do affix their signature to the bottom of this monologue by transforming the defeated Caruthian sentence "*And I think a man would have to put his soul at hazard. And I wont do that. I think now that maybe I never would"* to a more activist sentence, more in line with the new school, like say *"He would have to say, okay, I'll be part of this world*."

The chapter next arrives at the analysis of the dream monologue which takes its shape at the end of the film by Bell's dream being unfolded. Many critical readings of this dream aim at its symbolically absurd and nihilist tone which could be argued through the Caruthian jargon as well as the melancholic voice of LaCapra. Read through the lens of LaCapra, Žižek and Onega/Ganteau and their symbol-oriented interpretations, the figure of father is the most prominent symbol Bell can resort to. The stark difference between the textual and visual account here is that, this monologue, in essence, transforms into a dialogue in the film, whose other side is Loretta. The monologue to dialogue transformation, which is the creative brainchild of the Coen brothers'adaptation, closely ties it to the therapeutic "talking cure", hence the replacement of the testimonial passive tone with the active testimony of the Coen brothers.

LaCapra's famed innovation of "absence/loss" formulates the next portion of this chapter. Having differentiated between the two, the chapter swiftly shifts its lens on how the trauma of Chigurh in *No Country for Old Men* could metamorphose from "loss" to "absence". The individual

and specific “loss” derived from Chigurh’s trauma, owing to its compelling nature, is likely to transform into a wider and more ubiquitous culture of “absence”, which could be analogously likened to the decaying America. This transformation, As LaCapra posits, brings nothing but melancholy, lament and nostalgia, which is evidently witnessed in the psyche of most of the characters, particularly Sheriff Bell. This transformation is the first course of the chapter’s hypothetical trauma hermeneutics.

The second course, however, includes the anxiety-oriented thread of LaCapra’s discourse. According to LaCapra, a sense of anxiety is attendant upon the concept of “absence”, which cannot be obliterated unless one is able to convert it to “loss” via seeking a specific source for it. The more Bell strives to locate a source for such an anxiety-generating trauma (Chigurh), the more his efforts fail him. Neither able to locate a tangible source for his anxiety nor consequently successful in facilitating the process of transforming “absence” to “loss”, Bell, if not all the characters, is mired in his formless circumstance. All this, once more, evokes the Freudian “repetition compulsion” or “acting-out” and the Caruthian jargon of abreaction, as opposed to the process of working-through and redemption.

Balaev’s fluid trauma discourse is the next staple of this chapter’s arguments. Rather than shatter, the victim’s subjectivity, Balaev asserts, could be said to be exposed to further growth and fluidity in terms of identity, in the face of a traumatic experience. Having expounded on the nihilistic tone of the narrative and Bell’s defeated character, the foregoing exegesis concluds that the newly established trauma culture would not accommodate Balaev’s concepts of rebirth and growth. Caruth’s intergenerational trauma theory is later examined and exemplified through diverse textual instances of McCarthy’s novel, shedding light on how Sherriff Bell’s character is in an irremedial state of acting-out.

Do LaCapra and Balaev and their arguments lead us somewhere beyond the mere theoretical application? A glance at the dichotomies of acting-out/working-through, melancholy/mourning, and absence/loss would give us further clues as to how McCarthy tends to pave the way for an ominous path towards his ashen imagination *The Road*. Having his characters enact the dialectics of such dichotomies in favor of the abreactive jargon, McCarthy is taking the trajectory of loss-to-absence transformation against the very warning words of LaCapra. In fact, one could hypothesize that McCarthy’s loss (*No Country for Old Men*) with its specificities and particularities necessary for the nature of loss has a propensity for metamorphosing into absence

(*The Road*) with its vague and holistic nature, which generates nothing but anxiety, melancholy and nostalgia.

Carla Jean's portrayal in the brothers' visual world, which is symptomatic of her resilience and strength, shapes the next portion of this chapter. Carla Jean is the first person in the narrative not only to defy Chigurh's corrupt ideology by saying "The coin didnt have no say. It was just you", but also to disgrace Chigurh by not calling, not to mention her intrepidity in calling him "crazy". This rebelliously resilient state of Carla in the Coen brothers' innovative art, which is contrarily tenuous and docile in the novel, should catapult us into stampfl's resilience model. Trauma does not shatter Carla Jean the way it breaks Bell. This way, the brothers, once more, affix their signature to the bottom of the thematic messages of the narrative.

"The Uncanny" and its salient features such as death, silence and repetition are interrogated next in this chapter. The chapter opts for the initial massacre scene as the uncanniest scene of the film whose uncanny nature, this study argues, is informed by the long takes, lack of music, silence of the take and the slowness. The repetitional spectrality of Chigurh coupled with his uncanny murder weapon, aka the cattle gun, is what makes the narrative further uncanny. Barely can one escape the fateful death coming at the hands of Chigurh.

The surreally haunting encounter between Moss and Chigurh is selected as the most haunting of all. Comparing McCarhty's text to the brothers' artful adaptation, the study suggests that the Coen brothers' account diverges from McCarthy's text, in that they embellish their visuality with further uncanny aesthetics such as the ghostly walk, silence, repetitive shootings (compared to the literary source), death of an additional driver while gurgling blood, and eventually the surreal disappearance of Chigurh. All this spectrum of uncanny staples utilized by the Coen brothers in this particular sequence transcends the original text's uncanny nature to its unimaginable apex.

The epilogue of this chapter entails the Levinasion ethics explored in the character of Moss and the mortality of the allegedly immortal Chigurh. Having seen the dying man's face only once, Moss is but distraught, which makes him turn back, albeit belatedly, to the crime scene only to find the man dead, and ironically himself dead, as this is the very inception of all the cat and mouse game which ultimately brings him to the deathbed. This lucidly evokes the Levinasion "face of the other. Another ethically moving encounter throughout the narrative is how Moss decides to sacrifice himself for a girl whom he had barely met. He dies trying to save a stranger's life, whose

Levinasion face exhorts him to sense the deepest type of moral obligation. The Coen brothers, however, decide to lose sight of the most ethical encounter of the film attempting, this study suggested, to magnify the existential random chaos. One might wonder whether Moss's demise would tip the scale in the favor of Chigurh's further brutal victory. Yet, the ending scene disillusions both Chigurh himself and the audience alike. Having tossed the coin to Carla's death, he drives away reveling in his new victory only to be disillusioned by a fatal accident. He has waited all this while to lose his narcissistic invincibility only to a random idiotic crash. He seems not to be immortal after all.

Past these arguments, I would like to suggest a tripartite model which captures the soul of my intended messages in this chapter. The suggested triangle or tripartite model seems to encompass three vertexes which are shaped by three characters Chigurh, Moss, and Bell, who portray three traumatic tropes of spectrality, ethicality and testimony, respectively. No matter how this triangle lands, the vertex of Chigurh with the trope of spectrality and the traumatizing brutalities thereof seems to defeat the other vertexes which denote ethicality and testimony. This must be why the vertex of ethicality (Moss) dies and the vertex of spectrality (Chigurh) walks way, while the testimonial vertex does not, or cannot, but complain through jeremiad, melancholy, and consequently nihilism.

Beyond this chapter and on a platform to extrapolate the future trauma outlooks, it would be only fair if one went through all the theories and their application once more. All the staples seem to fit the bill from where they stand. Yet, where do they stand? Has the new school of trauma made any extraordinary difference compared to the abreactive jargon of Caruth when it comes to practice, namely the context of *No Country for Old Men*? Did the Levinasion ethicality and its "face of the other" help Moss take a different route than meet his demise, which was yet another trauma? Indeed, it was the Levinasion ethicality which did away with him in the first place, hence giving rise to further traumatization. In like manner, the testimonial monologues of Sherriff Bell not only laid waste to the very morale of the narrative, but it also amplified the very voice of defeat and nihilism.

All such theoretical staples operate on an aesthetically enjoyable plane and deserve only a commentary venue. Chigurh can be neither fought nor eluded and the fact that he can be hurt is not a relief knowing he gets away with all he has committed. Chapter two of this study lucidly appreciates the mortality of Chigurh deducing how this outlook could be constructive. On second

thoughts, he walks away and every single thread of practical exegesis is undermined once such a trauma is still on the loose. This must be why McCarthy takes us up on another odyssey towards the ashen traumas of *The Road* later. This odyssey is as horrifying as didactic, in that the primitive trauma logic of *No Country for Old Men* will yield itself to an apocalyptic logic, if any, of trauma. This transformation, then, would be the least a trauma outlook can covey through the "the prophet of destruction" in *No Country for Old Men*: a prelude to ash.

Chapter three embarks on a traumatic journey, or a road, whose essence diverges from the previous chapter in many respects with noteworthiness. *The Road* is a tale of ash and dust happening in a wasteland. Trauma is an understatement in addressing the narrative, if any, of *The Road*, which is shaped majorly by two characters, viz the father and the son. The chapter initiates its arguments with the traumatic non-referentiality and goes so far as to bring to light the very pertinence of the concept in the narrative. The traumatized history, Caruth argues relying on Freud, cannot be reliable. Similarly in *The Road*, nobody could even venture a guess as to whether where, when and how the original trauma or the apocalypse has occurred. All one is entitled to know is "[t]he clocks stopped at 1:17" (McCarthy 21). The lost temporality and its ensuing non-referentiality informs much of the plot and characters as well, as they cannot contribute much to the demystification of the original apocalyptic trauma, and even if they do, their accounts, according to the lights of Caruth, cannot be reliable, hence the non-referentiality. In contrast to McCarthy, Hillcoat has recourse to direct visual references to some particular traumas of the recent history, such as the 9/11 attacks or hurricane Katrina, which is precisely at odds with the logic of non-referentiality. Later, the chapter turns towards the scene of the original trauma and how Hillcoat's camera keeps the audience in the dark regarding the very underlying traumatic event by restraining its operation only to the domestic space of the house. This, suggested by this study, paves the way towards the traumatic non-referentiality.

The chapter, then, approaches flashbacks and their traumatic haunting within the context of *The Road*. The suicide of the wife and the obligation to euthanize the boy, lest the cannibals rape and eat him, were thought, by this study, to be the most ubiquitous flashbacks haunting the psyche of the father throughout the narrative. All this haunting runs in tandem with the Caruthian possession and the spectrality thereof. Lacanian "real" was likewise utilized to account for the inexplicably missed nature of the original moment of trauma. Hillcoat's flashbacks emphasize the role of the wife further, but they miss out on the intellectual weight of the character instead.

Moreover, the study chose to analyze the very initial flashbacks of the film portraying the wife's innocent beauty and the unblemished verdant nature. Differentiating all the prelapsarian era from the postlapsarian era by means of color─ all the prelapsarian scenes are shot in vibrant colorful photography whereas the postlapsarian scenes are shot in nothing but dark or gray color, to signify nothing but death─ Hillcoat aims to create a dichotomy which instantly evokes Torok's concept of split psyche and Baer's "twofold structural disjunction between an experience and its integration into narrative memory, understanding, and communicability" (10), save for the fact that what is split here is not the psyche of the victim, but the narrative.

The chapter, next, touches upon the concept of childhood trauma and how its elements rob the boy in the narrative of his self-image, schemas and his sense of reality. All these elements were explored by dint of referring to particular textual examples which highlight each trauma staple. The study also proposed that the most fatal wound to the psyche of the boy, which murdered his soul beyond redemption, was bearing witness to infanticide, culminating in the child's total silence and shock. Furthermore, with respect to Shengold, the traumatized child develops self-destructive pathways, whose instance was shown through textual examples within the framework of *The Road*. Hillcoats adaptation, however, loses sight of two important traumas namely, the infanticide and the captivated pregnant women whose children were most likely to be consumed by the cannibals. This, many critics hold, is simply unfilmable.

Barely could the ashen traumas of *The Road* situate themselves in the immediacy of the testimonial threads of trauma discourse. Yet, the testimonial plane of the narrative, held by this study consisted of three approached: talking to each other, talking to the dead, and talking to the past(flashbacks). All throughout the narrative the pair rely on the unbreakable bond between one another which is fueled by the sentimentally meaningful dialogues exchanged between the two, whose textual examples were detailed in the course of the composition of the chapter. Such conversation aside, the father and the son find themselves unable to avoid conversing with the dead traumatic space of the narrative, mainly the "cauterized" nature. The third course, talking to the past, was the very flashbacks whose analytical implications had already come to light. These flashbacks, suggested by this study, occupied a liminal space between past and present which ran back and forth in the traumatized psyche of the father, creating a "twofold structural disjunction" not only in the psyche of the father but also the narrative. As such, the Green's "secondary

thinking" found its relational mode into the argument of the chapter, as the more the traumatized father wanted to speak, the more went unspoken.

Hartman's visual imagery was the next staple to be interrogated at this point. Placing a huge body of emphasis on the role of nature processing the haunting images, Hartman steadfastly believes in the reciprocal dialectics between the man and the nature. The annihilation of this reciprocation is, Hartman remarks, the first step towards the apocalypse which hold utterly true in the context of *The Road*. Later, the study shapes an analogy between the "pastoral pipe" of Hartman's Boy of Winander and the flute played by the boy in McCarthy's *The Road*.

At this juncture, I propose, in ways of developing a conclusive axiom apropos McCarthy's characters in the face of their traumatic moments, we take a retrospective look at how he shapes them through corpus narratives' trajectory. This matters inasmuch as the characters, at times, reveal the language of trauma more evidently than the narratives since the narrative, particularly in *The Road*, seems to have suffered the same death that has befallen the ashen world. In so doing, a certain resemblance between a certain Carla Jean and the father, respectively in *No Country for Old Men* and *The Road*, seems to surface. Both characters seem to fight, rebel and resist surrender even in the face of the most traumatizing moments of facing Chigurh and the ashen world respectively. This should evoke Stampfl and Balaev. On the other hand, one can spot a certain kinship between Sheriff Bell and the wife once more, in that both opt for regressive paths. Bell in *No Country for Old Men* yields to defeat and retires himself away upon realizing how he can never be a match for Chigurh in much the same way, or perhaps even more radically, the wife in *The Road* takes her own life in the face of an apocalypse reveling in cannibalism and infanticide. This, however, taps on the old haunting voice of trauma evoking Caruthian jargon once more.

Hillcoat's testimonial trademarks shaped the next portion of the chapter, which encompassed his preference for the real locations and aesthetics over the special effects, diminished poetic tone, masterful voice-over of Mortensen and the tempo of editing. Albeit censured for the slow pace of editing by many critics, this study held that for a true testimonial process to come alive, the narrative should allow the characters to digest, or listen and speak to, the very pivotal core of the traumatic experience. This testimony then cannot, the study put forth, run in tandem with the dynamics of certain other apocalyptic or dystopian films. Later, the chapter sheds some quick light on how the stellar performance of Mortensen and McPhee and the decent voice-over of Mortensen amplified the testimonial voice of Hillcoat's adaptation.

The chapter, later, essays to survey the concept of survival, which is inextricably linked to trauma. The study has delineated three routes of survival as follows: the traumatic wasteland, the emancipation, and in-between mystery. The first path, pithily put, yields nothing but despair, desperation, traumatization, violence and savagery, which all stand against the values of the redemptive path. This path, viz the traumatic wasteland, falls very akin to the ideals of the old school of trauma, with the Caruthian discourse of abreaction and the Freudian "compulsion" at its core.

The second path called emancipation by this study, however, entails all the constructive hope-oriented staples such as the existence of the messianic child, the "fire", the miraculous family emerging at the end of the story, and eventually McCarthy's "south". All these features were investigated in the light of particular trauma tropes such as images and symbols theorized by Zizek and Onega/Ganteau. Last but not least, this path involves", Laub and Podell's claim that "survival itself should be considered as a type of art of trauma" and their admiration for poetry as the stage upon which the testimonial dialogues with the traumatic past can occur. This exaltation, suggested by this study, closely allies itself to the deeply poetic language of McCarthy in *The Road*. To the end of the novel emerges a paragraph portraying the nostalgic memory of "trout" and their graceful movement. This closing coda is the premise upon which I have built the stapled of the third path called in-between mystery. Shorty put, the paragraph simply, and paradoxically mysteriously, demands us to bear witness to what we see. It neither redeems nor traumatizes, hence liminality. Contemplation, proposed by this study, lies at the core of this path. Rothberg's constructive trauma vocabulary and Estes's reform-based tenets help the theoretical exegesis of this path.

Once more and upon closer inspection, another tripartite trauma model can be witnessed whose components (characters) correspond precisely to the very three paths this study has offered so far. This trio is characterized by the wife, the father and the son, who respectively characterize the first, the second and the third paths. The first path, aka the traumatic wasteland, can closely ally itself to the psyche of the wife who, upon her realization of the irreversibility of the traumas imposed on her, decided to commit suicide, which strikes a close chord with the staples of the first path once more. On the other hand, the father, unrelentingly haunted by a myriad of traumas, the mentioned suicide in the main, does not yield to the very same irreversibility which kills the wife. Instead, he works it through and grows out of it, while the wife tends to solely act it out. The father's trauma language is that of hope, fluidity and rebirth which might evoke the new school

voices such as Balaev and Stampfl. Eventually, the son's trauma rhetoric closely converses with the third path, for he neither acts out nor works through. In other words, he develops suicidal tendencies which echo the abreactive jargon, while at the same time he tends to grow out of all the traumas that have befallen him. He is lost but not a lost cause. Unlike his mother, he intends to fight and survive, yet he reflects certain destructive inclinations occasionally, hence his affinity with the third path.

Hillcoat's visual world abides by the three hypothetical trauma-oriented survival paths that this study has set forth. However, the most significant paragraph of the novel (the ending paragraph), which portrays the trout and the other enigmatic messages, faces an elliptical decision by the director, which could be deemed to be a way of affixing his signature to the bottom of *The Road*. This signature, moreover, entails other redemptive additions such the dog in the ending scene and the beetle flying away miraculously some mins before that. Even when the credit roll, Hillcoat speaks of hope and emancipation through adding a collection of different sounds which seem to be indicative of nature, children, and animals, the very same entities McCarthy's novel had striven to portray as extinct or lifeless. All these visual additions coupled with politicizing McCarthy's text (portrayal of World Trade Center's collapse) are indicative of Hillcoat's calling all to action, which evokes once more the logic of Rothberg and Estes.

Through a further deductive reasoning, I would like to state that the visual world of the corpus narratives of this study seems to outweigh, in terms of hope and traces of redemption, the textual world of McCarthy. Both the Coen brothers and Hillcoat tend to affix their redemptive signatures of hope, rebirth, and growth to the bottom of their adaptations, which means the directors, via resorting to characters (Carla Jean in *No Country for Old Men*), creative additions (Twin Towers in *The Road*), and certain transformations (*"He would have to say, okay, I'll be part of this world*." in *No Country for Old Men*) develop certain affinities in approaching the new school of trauma.

Once more, and beyond the staples of the chapters which the foregoing study has examined, I believe I owe this project more than mere theories and the application thereof. The odyssey, whose inception McCarthy created through Chigurh's walking away, turns out to yield to more than a Chigurh-like traumatic trajectory. The prelude of *No Country for Old Men* with the "prophet of destruction" lying at its core is nothing compared to the postlude of *The Road* with the apocalypse at its heart. Chigurh kills robotically, yet he neither eats humans nor roasts infants.

Even the way I, wittingly or unwittingly, have tried to utilize the traumas theories differs from the first to the second narrative with utmost noteworthiness.

Testimonial threads of *No Country for Old Men* (the monologues) which evoke Felman's notions metamorphose to Hartman's visual imagery and muteness in *The Road*. Bell's wife, whom I had called the talking cure incarnate, listens wholeheartedly in ways of curing Bell's traumatized nature, while the man's wife in *The Road* prefers to fade into nothingness, hence further traumatizing his psyche. LaCapra's "absence/loss" dichotomy, its conflation or its transformation, and the anxiety attendant upon the concept of "absence" made some sense in *No Country for Old Men*, yet one might wonder for years what is lost or otherwise absent in *The Road?*

The traumas are way past the anxiety and no specific source can be genuinely stipulated for its point of departure, in the least, hence my eluding such arguments in the context of *The Road*. Even on a visual scale, when one compares the directorial signatures of hope and redemption in both pictures, what the Coen brothers did with Carla Jean seems to make more sense than what Hillcoat did with the beetle and the dog. Belatedness, by the same token, seems to be a cogent argument in *No Country for Old Men* as the characters, albeit disillusioned by the "prophet of destruction", might try to make sense of him over time, whereas, the characters in *The Road*, would not stand the chance of doing so, even if they tried for a hundred years, hence the futility of belatedness.

The narrative in *No Country for Old Men* seems to have a structured plot, yet *The Road* seems, owing to the traumatic loss of temporality, to have fallen short of reliable referential clues as to what constituted the narrative, hence my preference for the arguments of Caruthian non-referentiality in *The Road*. Venturing into the ethical realm made sense in *No Country for Old Men* as Moss portrayed the Levinasion "face of the other" in his ethical encounter with the hitch-hiking girl, while I eschewed the ethical plane in *The Road*, as no morality seems to have survived upon the apocalypse, save for the boy's case, whose innocence was more the result of naivety which was in turn the consequence of childhood trauma. "The Uncanny" seems to lose its significance along this ruthless transformation as well, once concepts like death and repetition are likely to be deemed quite trivial and powerless compared to cannibalism and infanticide, hence my eluding this particular line of arguments. What is left, the study seems to suggest, is how the post-traumatic survival efforts fare in the face of the apocalyptic savagery, which is what a good part of chapter three hinged on.

The thematic codes change from the prelude to postlude in much the same way the trauma discourse evolves from an anxious prelude to an already ashen postlude. One reason Chigurh walks away with ease in the prelude is the nihilist and ineffectual testimonial jeremiad of Bell, which could readily, with an iota of intrepidity or positivity, turn into a step towards standing up against him. The farther Chigurh escaped, the closer the humanity got to its demise, as the metaphorical escape of Chigurh is proportionate with the narcissism of humanity (Bell) in solely trying to protect oneself rather than protect the collective good. The "prophet of destruction", alas, got away with all he had wreaked havoc on. Unpunished was Chigurh and untouched was the narcissist psyche of the humanity. Then rose the apocalypse as the consequence of this blatant oblivion which shattered not only the said narcissism but also the whole planet. This ashen postlude, this study avers as its last words, could have been halted if the "prophet of destruction" as the metaphorical portrayal of humanity's narcissism had given its place to the vocabulary of care, bravery, solicitude for all. It was too late, though. This tardiness collapsed McCarthy's world. Let us hope we will not be tardy in the real one.

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Appendix

Chapter 2– description

Figures 1-5: the Coen brothers' shots at the outset of *No Country for Old Men* portraying the barren non-human habitats and dark landscapes.

Figures 6-7: the double-sided dialogue between Bell and Loretta as opposed to the dour soliloquys of the novel accompanied with the caring listening side of Loretta.

Figures 8-9: Carla's resilient defiance against Chigurh's insistence on calling the coin.

Figures 10-12: the Coen brothers' shots portraying the uncanny massacre scene.

Figure 13: an exemplary shot with Chigurh punching a hole through the forehead of his victim asking him: "Would you hold still please, Sir?"

Figures 14-18: the uncanny shots displaying the spectral encounter between Moss and Chigurh and the surreal disappearance of Chigurh.

Figures 19-23: the chaotic scene portraying the vague death of Moss by the Mexicans.

Chapter 2 - images

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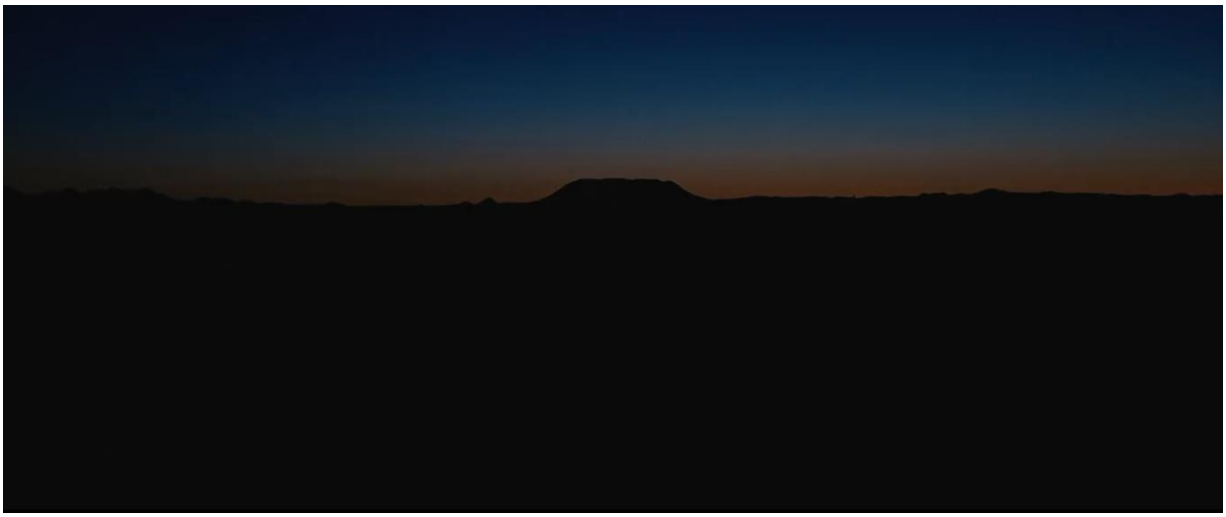

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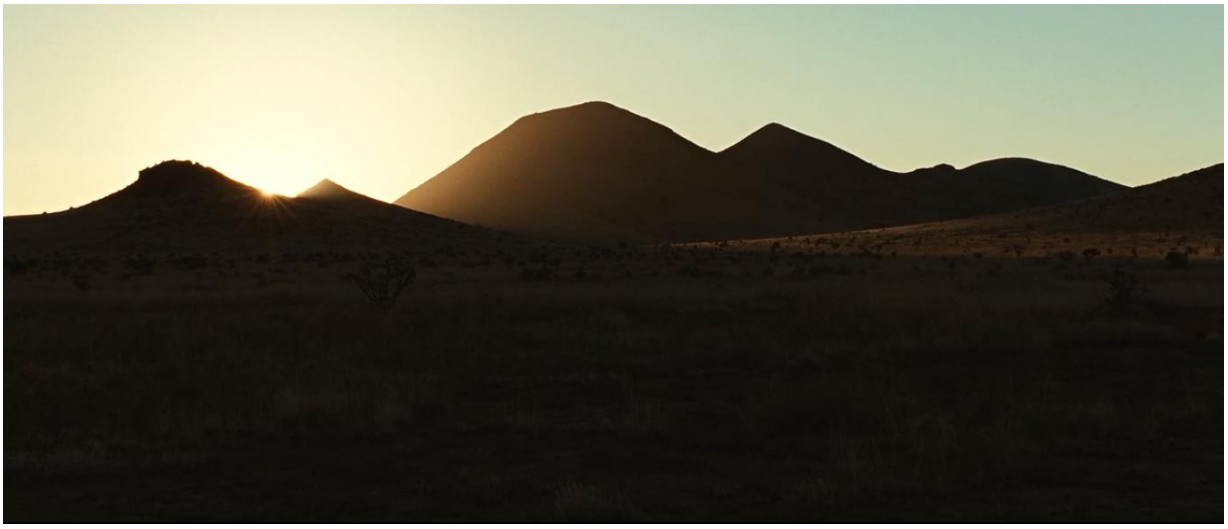

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Desert Sands
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Chapter 3– description

Figures 1-2: Hillcoat's images of destruction of World Trade Center and the marooned ships after Hurricane Catrina in *The Road*

Figures 3-5: the shots displaying "abandoned stretches of freeway, deserted coalfields, a burned-down amusement park"

Figures 6-7: the scene including the aesthetics of traumatic apocalypse moment with the alienated face of the wife and the man's hasty bathtub filling to save water for the rainy day.

Figures 8-11: pre-apocalyptic flashbacks including the birth of the baby, the concert, the piano duet scene, and the car scene

Figures 12-14: Hillcoat's flashbacks to the pre-apocalyptic nature, namely trees, flowers, and the wife at the very outset of the film

Figures 15-18: the apocalyptic shots of deserted gas stations, looted grocery stores, burning-down-to-ash landscapes, and industrial ruins

Figures 19-21: Cellar shots including dismembered bodies in the cellar with McPhee's shocked face while later covering it with his hand to avoid witnessing the alienating mutilated bodies

Figure 22: Hillcoat's hopeful depiction of a still-living dog

Figure 23: Hillcoat's beetle as another beacon of hope

Chapter 3– images

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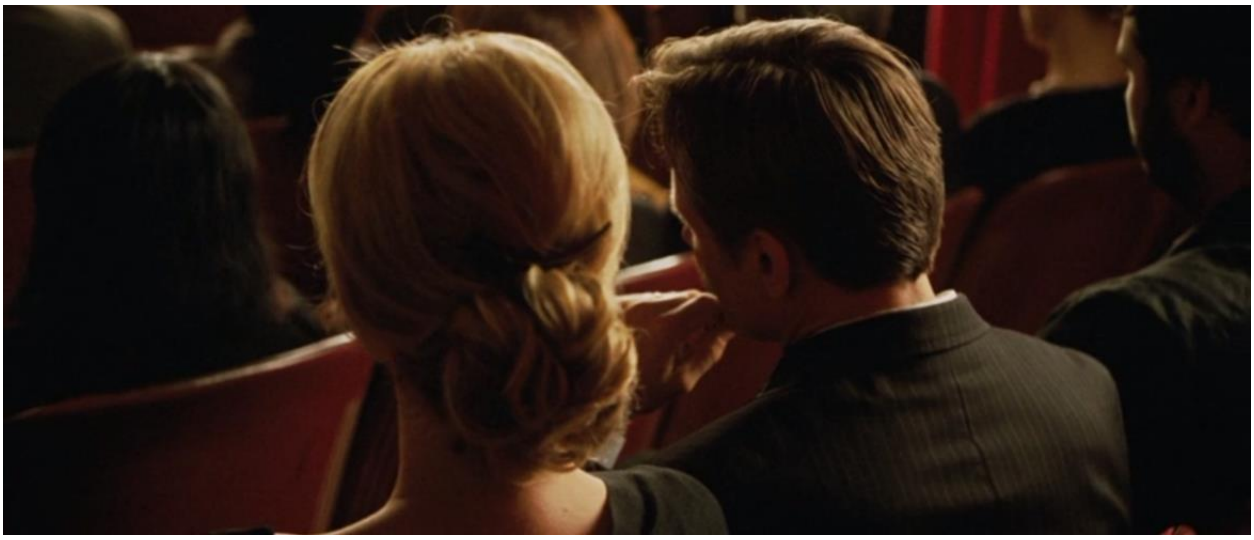

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